

Summer is fading and the days vibrate between hot and cool. It's the end of berry season and you may be wondering what to do with the stragglers - those final blackberries and strawberries. Here is a delightfully refreshing recipe that will dress up lunch or an outdoor barbecue.

Berry Buttermilk Soup

2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries, blackberries, raspberries or strawberries
1 1/2 cups fruit juice or sweet wine
2 Tbsp. culinary lavender buds
1 Tbsp. instant tapioca
1/2 cup sugar
1 cup buttermilk

Allow berries to thaw slightly. If desired, set aside 5 or 6 berries for garnish. Pour fruit juice or wine into a 2-quart pan. Bring to a boil and add lavender buds. Remove from heat and steep 20 minutes. Strain juice through a strainer and return to pan. Add berries, tapioca and sugar and bring back to a boil; boil for 1 minute then remove from heat.

Allow berries mixture to cool slightly. Puree in a blender or food processor until smooth. If you're using blackberries or raspberries, strain mixture through sieve into a bowl. Cover and chill thoroughly. Add buttermilk just before serving. Garnish with berries, mint or lavender stem.
4 1-cup servings

Berry Soup w/out Buttermilk

Use the same ingredients and process but eliminate the buttermilk. Serve with a dollop of creme fraiche or sour cream. Makes 4 1/2-cup servings.