

## British strawberries hit shelves early due to warmer weather

**British strawberries are now on supermarket shelves in abundance thanks to the milder winter and warmer spring.**

Recent weather has helped to speed up flowering and ripening as the strawberry season gets underway earlier than usual.

Berries have the biggest market share of all fruit grown in the UK, making up an impressive 24.5 percent, and this has pushed the value of the berry industry over £1.4 billion.

During the past year, more than 131,000 tonnes of strawberries were sold in the UK, with shoppers spending more than £653 million on the classically British berry - an increase of 9% from 2018.

Consumption of fresh raspberries has increased by 17% and blueberries by 14%.

And this summer, there are new varieties to enjoy including the large and delicious Malling Centenary, grown in Kent by the UK national berry breeding programme.

Centenary has rapidly become the mainstay of early to mid-season British strawberry production and is proving as well-loved by consumers as it is by growers.

British Summer Fruits, the industry body that represents 95 percent of berries supplied to UK supermarkets, said new innovations in greenhouse production has helped introduce new varieties.

Chairman Nick Marston said: "Ongoing innovations in our industry including the introduction of great new varieties of berries delivering sweetness and flavour has meant that we can now offer shoppers the freshest, highest-quality British berries for nine months of the year."

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