

Wild Blueberry Health Research Showcased on National Stage

PORTLAND, Maine (July 2, 2009) — Leading scientists studying the health properties of Wild Blueberries presented their latest findings related to the positive link between antioxidant-rich berry consumption and disease prevention at the 2009 Berry Health Benefits Symposium. Wild Blueberries have been central to research exploring the role of diet in disease prevention and management of age-related health risks. Recent discoveries attribute potential health benefits of the Wild Blueberry to antioxidants such as anthocyanin, anti-inflammatories and other natural compounds found throughout the deep blue Wild Blueberry. Wild Blueberries have the highest antioxidant capacity per serving compared with more than 20 other fruits. (Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, 2004; 52:4026-4037) Antioxidants help protect against disease and age-related health risks by battling against free radicals — unstable oxygen molecules associated with cancer, heart disease and the effects of aging. In addition to fighting oxidative stress, Wild Blueberries are now thought to have powerful anti-inflammatory properties.

“According to Susan Davis, MS, RD, Nutrition Advisor to the Wild Blueberry Association of North America, researchers are active in many areas of study. “Research is underway exploring the potential positive effects of Wild Blueberry consumption on vision, cardiovascular health, protecting the brain from age-related deficits like Alzheimer’s and dementia, and cancer prevention,” said Davis. “The national Berry Symposium offered researchers the opportunity to share insights about the health-promoting potential of native berries like Wild Blueberries, strawberries, cranberries, raspberries and blackberries,” continued Davis.

“The Wild Blueberry industry has a long-standing commitment to health research, which has led to exciting discoveries about the berries potential health benefits,” said Wild Blueberry Association President J. Kim Higgins. “ Current research supports our education efforts encouraging people to eat Wild Blueberries every day for optimal nutrition. Readily available in the supermarket frozen fruit case, Wild Blueberries are the best berry to have on hand for every day use,” continued Higgins.

Wild Blueberry research has been led by a core group known as the Bar Harbor Group. Leading scientists from the U.S. and Canada participate in an annual Wild Blueberry health research summit to share current findings and advance collaborations into new areas.

The Berry Health Benefits Symposium is an outgrowth of efforts by the National Berry Crops Initiative (NBCI), a collaborative partnership of industry, academia and government focused on policy and programs that support the continued growth and sustainability of berry crops in the United States. Wild Blueberry Commission Executive Director David Bell serves as Board President and current berry crop representation on NBCI includes strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, cultivated blueberries, cranberries, lingonberries, currants and gooseberries. The NBCI fosters berry health benefits research as well as promotion of related health and nutrition benefits. In addition to Bell’s NBCI leadership, Wild Blueberry Association nutritionist Susan Davis serviced as chair of the National Berry Health Benefits Symposium’s public relations committee.

SOURCE: Wild Blueberry Association of North America

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