



# EMERALD KEEPERS

For an Emerald Green, Ocean Blue Coronado

# STRAWBERRY SEASON



Strawberries are currently plentiful in our local stores and markets. Strawberry season in San Diego County starts in late March and runs into June. The delicious, healthy and versatile fruit is a perennial favorite, but the future of California strawberries is at risk from environmental factors.

## CALIFORNIA GROWN

California produces around 90% of the 1.34-million-ton U.S. strawberry crop. While strawberries grow all along the cool California coast, the prime growing regions are coastal Salinas, Watsonville, Santa Maria, Oxnard, and Orange County. Unfortunately, this year's heavy rains and floods devastated many strawberry farms in the northern part of the state.

## CHANGING CLIMATE

Strawberries require just the right amount of water, heat, and sunlight to thrive. California's frequent droughts, heatwaves, and wildfires wreak havoc on strawberry farms, making crop yields unpredictable and the future of strawberry farming uncertain.

**Heat.** Higher temperatures cause strawberry plants heat stress that stunts their growth and decimates plants. Hotter and drier conditions can also lead to an increase in harmful pests and diseases. Studies suggest increased heat could decrease strawberry farm yields by 10% within the next decade.

**Water.** Despite the rains of this past winter, California's long-term agricultural water resources are limited. Less water for the crops can lead to greater costs, smaller berries, and a reduced yield.

**Fire.** Wildfires also threaten California's strawberry industry as the smoke reduces the amount of sunlight needed for plant growth, while ash and debris from the fires can contaminate the soil, making it difficult for plants to absorb nutrients.

## ORGANIC

Strawberries are No. 1 on the "dirty dozen" list of fruits and vegetables with the highest level of pesticide residue even after washing. When shopping, look for organic strawberries, which are produced without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. A Washington State University study found organic strawberries are sweeter and more nutritious, which can justify the price premium. In addition, organic farming enriches the soil making it more adaptable to the changing climate.

## SAVE STRAWBERRIES

You can help ensure a sweet future for California strawberries. Support local farmers by purchasing California-grown strawberries. Reduce your emissions, conserve water, and advocate for environmental initiatives that will enable strawberry plants to survive and thrive in the future.

## PICK YOUR OWN

San Diego is home to several strawberry fields where the public can pick berries from approximately March through July. Visit these farms to enjoy locally grown fruit and witness the fragile strawberry industry.

- Carlsbad Strawberry Company. Off Interstate 5 at Cannon Road, these family-owned strawberry fields have been in the Carlsbad area since 1948. Open daily for strawberry picking during the spring season. [carlsbadstrawberrycompany.com](http://carlsbadstrawberrycompany.com)
- Julian Farm and Orchard. Scheduled to open weekends in June once their crop is ripe. Located off the 78/79 Highway 3 miles west of Julian. [julianfarmandorchard.com](http://julianfarmandorchard.com)
- Kenny's Strawberry Farm. This Fallbrook family farm requires reservations for picking midweek and weekends. [kennysstrawberryfarm.com](http://kennysstrawberryfarm.com)

Check online before visiting to ensure they are open the day and time you plan to go.



For more information visit [EMERALDKEEPERS.ORG](http://EMERALDKEEPERS.ORG)