



STRAWBERRIES...
RIPE STRAWBERRIES!

Does anything sum up an English summer more deliciously than the thought of sweet, unbelievably juicy, freshly picked strawberries? Just one bite, and if you're not already picnicing close to the sound of willow on leather you'll soon imagine you are. Or you'll willingly dream you're alongside Centre Court at Wimbledon, basking in the sun.

But while we may think of this fabulous fruit as the very essence of our green and pleasant land, it was actually the Romans who first cultivated strawberries ...as early as 200 BC. And not just for their taste. Romans believed they could cure a number of illnesses too. Smart Romans! Today, we know that the ellagic acid in strawberries can help fight cancers, the flavanoids help reduce cholesterol, and just eight strawberries contain more vitamin C than an orange...in fact 140% of our RDA. Amazingly, for something so morishly sweet, a 100g serving has just 50 calories...and 0g of fat!

Happily for us, despite their Mediterranean heritage, strawberries grow best right here on our doorstep. They thrive in a relatively cool, moist climate... exactly the conditions often to be found in West Yorkshire. Which means the newly harvested crop has virtually no distance to travel before it finds itself on the menu at a Ribble Valley Inn. For Nigel, that's the cue to serve up some perennial favourites...including one which needs very little help from his undoubted skills. He simply adds

an overly generous portion of rich, clotted cream. Now...about those calories!

MAKINS FARM

The Makin family has been growing strawberries for over 50 years. But it's only recently that Nigel Haworth discovered – first hand – just why their fruit is so much in demand. During a visit to their farm in 2008, Nigel was introduced to the 'grading' process which means he can order exactly the size strawberries he wants...and have them the day after they are picked. "I wanted the best", says Nigel. "But I wanted them small...small and very sweet. And that's exactly what I can have...every day...from Makins Farm."



CHRIS AND ANNABEL MAKIN

Brother and sister, Chris and Annabel Makin, now run the business originally started by their father Edmund. And those 50 years of collective experience

are very handy when it comes to getting the most from every ray of summer...and autumn...sun.

While most of us who grow at home think of strawberries as a mid-summer crop, Makins Farm actually 'stretches' the season to a full seven months, the first crop yielding fruit from early May, with later sowings providing autumn strawberries right through until November.



TUNNEL VISION

The secret has a lot to do with knowledge, technique and dedicated husbandry. But technology plays a big part too. The soil in the Makin family's part of West Yorkshire is perfect. The moist climate is ideal. And the longer hours of daylight in the North are a major factor. But it's the multi-bay, telescopic poly tunnels that are key. These help protect the delicate berries from weather damage,



prolonging the season, warming the soil, encouraging growth and boosting the yield. As for the varieties, there are four grown on the farm... Albion for its flavour and intense fragrance, Darselect for its a strong, sweet taste, Elsanta for its excellent flavour, and Sonata, a new variety with a sweeter flavour when picked early in the season. And all four varieties are supplied to RVI.

In all, the Makin family actually farms an amazing 100 acres of strawberries...just as well because as market leaders for quality their fruit is in huge demand.

Makins

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