

Archer strawberry, hits the sweet spot

September 13 2016, by Matt Hayes



Courtney Weber, associate professor in the School of Integrative Plant Science, at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) in Geneva, New York. Credit: Rob Way/College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Strawberry fans, rejoice. The newest Cornell strawberry variety concentrates intense flavor in a berry big enough to fill the palm of your hand.

Topping out at over 50 grams, Archer, the latest creation from Cornell berry breeder Courtney Weber, is comparable in size to a plum or small peach. But this behemoth stands out in ways beyond just its proportions: the flavor and aroma exceed what you'd expect from a [strawberry](#) of such unusual size.

"Archer is an extraordinarily high-flavored berry," said Weber, associate professor in the Horticulture Section of the School of Integrative Plant Science. "It has an intense aroma, so when you bite into it you get a strong strawberry smell, and it's very sweet, so you get a strong strawberry flavor that really makes an impact."

Weber says the combination of large fruit and strong flavor hits the sweet spot for local growers who sell in farmers markets, u-pick sites and roadside stands. Archer ripens in June and holds its large size through multiple harvests for two to three weeks.

"Strawberries are the ultimate summertime fruit that signal the start of the summer season. People love that vivid flavor, and Archer delivers a complex, sunny aroma and taste that just screams summer," said Weber. "Consumers have a real preference for large berries, and with fruits that can be as big as the palm of your hand, Archer really draws people's attention and fills baskets quickly. It's larger on average than any of the dozens of strawberry varieties we've tested over the years."



The new strawberry, Archer. Credit: Rob Way/College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

And this big berry is no wimp: The cold-hardy variety is tough enough to withstand winters, making it suitable for growing in diverse climates throughout New York as well as in places like Michigan and Minnesota and along the Mid-Atlantic from Maryland into the Northeast.

Weber's strawberries are bred to be hardy. He breeds in a perennial system without soil fumigation so that only the most robust varieties thrive. With a durable root system, this high-yield variety is tolerant to root rots and other common diseases.

Fruit breeding has a long history at Cornell, which has introduced more

than 280 fruit varieties since 1880. The berry breeding program is the oldest of its kind in the U.S., and Archer is the 43rd strawberry variety released by the program, and the fifth by Weber, who joined Cornell in 1999. Other recent releases include the Herriot strawberry, a high-yielding midseason variety, and the burgundy-colored Walker sold exclusively by Burpee Seed as Purple Wonder. Archer is the largest strawberry ever released at Cornell's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) in Geneva, New York.

Weber selected for Archer in 2001 from the first field he planted at NYSAES, and it has been under field evaluation for many years. Final field testing was done on the farms of members of the New York State Berry Growers Association.

Provided by Cornell University

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