

What do a 15 year-old girl and a 19 year-old boy have in common?

Emily turned 15 last week. There are a lot of things a 15 year-old might want for their birthday: IPAD, IPOD, or [Smartphone](#). One thing you wouldn't expect a 15-year-old to request is... a strawberry.

No, a "strawberry" is not the [new Blackberry](#). We're talking about a strawberry, and, not just *any* strawberry. If you'll notice, I used the singular form of strawberry to describe her birthday request. We'll get to that, in a minute. For now, just take a moment to think about a 15 year-old girl requesting a strawberry for her birthday.



Welcome to Richardson's Candy Kitchen, home of the famous chocolate-covered strawberry. The chocolate-covered strawberry at Richardson's is Holy Grail of delicacies. If you are not yet familiar with them, you have a brief time to become acquainted, if you're lucky and the weather permits. These rare birds only appear for a few weeks at the height of strawberry season. They are available each day until they sell out—and they do, quickly.

What makes these strawberries so special? We've all had a chocolate-covered strawberry. I mean, how good could they *be*? There are several contributions to their amazingness. These strawberries diligently practice tip # 1 of the *Top Ten Tips in the Kitchen*, from my new book, *The No Recipe Cookbook: FARE WELL*. FARE WELL is an acronym for Fresh, Ripe, Whole, and Local. That is exactly what these babies are. Picked fresh every morning at Smiarowski Farm in Hatfield, just a few miles down the road, they are then delivered promptly. As soon as they

arrive, they are swiftly covered in a double-dipped process (we'll get to that, too, in a minute). All the strawberries are prepared at the same time, for ultimate fresh flavor and uniformity. They are lovingly placed in an adorable "itsy bitsy teeny weeny pinky polka dot bikini" paper holder and proudly presented to the public. They are out by 11:00 and within a few hours, they are gone.

Richardson's chocolate-covered strawberries are huge! You could barely hold two in the palm of your hand. Sometimes typically-small fruit sacrifices flavor for size, and that can happen with strawberries. But, these berries are both ginormous and fantastically juicy. They concurrently burst in your mouth and retain the integrity of their shape, gently coaxing your mouth to plow through to the other side of the bite, where your [teeth meet](#). Their sweetness holds a hint of tangy acidity, tickling your tongue. And the smell... dear Mary, the smell. Like a perfectly aromatic tomato whiffed immediately after plucking, these strawberries explode with giddy joy into your nostrils and swirl magically up your sinuses, filling you with dizzy ecstasy. It's not just the strawberry that is intoxicating. These magical morsels are double-dipped, first in a *fondant*—a simple white [sugarglaze](#), like the top of a Napoleon. Next, they are dipped in a dark chocolate. It is pure, dense and butter-rich and not too sweet, so that the fondant counter-balances the tender bitter bite-back of the dark master. The combination is a symphony of texture, sensual smells, contrasting colors, and complex sweet sensations that fully engage the taste buds.

You think I'm laying it on a bit thick. I can tell. I see you rolling your eyes as you read this. But trust me; this is a once-a-year phenomenon, like the Supermoon or Perseid meteor shower.

If you don't believe me, ask around. These masterpieces have held court in this valley for quite some time. Richardson's opened in 1954 and began offering their strawberries around 1973. They are a family-owned business, trading hands around 1983 to the Woodward's. I spoke with their daughter, Kathie Williams, who currently runs the store. Kathie was 18 when her parents took over and remembers eating the strawberries, as do her children, now. Her niece Emily recently turned 15 and loves them so much that she specifically requests them on her birthday. Every year around June, my son reminds me that "it's berry time." He turns 20 this year, and if you know any 20 year-old males, you'll appreciate how unusual that type of behavior is, for that demographic.

Richardson's chocolate-covered strawberries are wonderful treats at parties and picnics. They make awesome teacher's gifts. I could imagine them being the highlight of the dessert table at a family reunion or special summer gathering. They may be around until July 4th, and their bright red glory is worthy of our Yankee American pride. They burst as brightly as a firework!

Fans come from all over the country. One man from Texas visits yearly. That makes sense, as these babies are as big as Texas! People come regularly, and some patrons visit daily. They keep a keen watch on the “strawberry report,” waiting for that first day. I join that particular breed of zealous local devotees, emailing Kathie several times to confirm the ETA and secure my order.

The strawberries are basically gluten-free; although for people with sensitivity, note that they are not prepared in gluten-free facilities. Throughout the year, Richardson’s sells chocolate-covered frozen bananas and in the autumn, they offer caramel-apples. And of course, Richardson’s Candy Kitchen sells candy... all things candy. Fresh, homemade, delicious candy. Somehow I managed to wolf down a few salted caramels in between three strawberries. But hey, when in Rome...

Strawberries are available until the season is over, which is... probably close to when you’re reading this. You will be so grateful that you picked up this paper today. Call in sick tomorrow and make the drive down to Deerfield. Or, as soon as you are through with this article, immediately pile your 15 year-old and your 20 year-old (and your 40 year-old and your 80 year-old) into the car and make the trip. Plan to get there around noon.

To reserve your berries, contact Richardson’s:

(413) 772-0443

1-800-81SWEET

rck@richardsonscandy.com

<http://www.richardsonscandy.com>

One final note: Emily never got her strawberry on her birthday, as the red beauties sold out before she could get her hands on one (how dedicated are the Woodward’s to their customers!). So, when you make the trip down, remember our birthday girl and buy her a gift, Richardson’s-style!

Author Bio:

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