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## Influence of a New Growing Technology on Antioxidant Capacity and Phenolic Composition of Blackberry ' a anska Bestrna'

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Original scientific paper

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### SUMMARY

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30%  
*Botrytis cinerea* Pers.,  
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The investigation was conducted in a ' a anska bestrna' blackberry orchard set up using the intensive cultivation technology, i.e. with pre-formed double-sloping eaves (rain-shield).

Considering that the Serbian blackberry yield suffers an annual loss of around 30% due to gray mould caused by the phytopathogenic fungi *Botrytis cinerea* Pers., introduction of more intensive blackberry cultivation systems is imperative in order to prevent adverse action of rain and other abiotic components, thus securing continuous harvest and supply of improved-quality fruits.

This cultivation technology contributes to a higher content of high-quality fruits, i.e. prevention of gray mould, while at the same time securing continual harvesting,

regardless of the environmental conditions.

Each blackberry sample was analysed for phenolic acids (protocatechuic, 4-hydroxybenzoic, vanillic, ellagic, gallic, *p*-coumaric, caffeic, and ferulic acids), flavonoids (quercetin), anthocyanidins (cyanidin), total phenolics, total anthocyanins, and Trolox-equivalent antioxidant capacity. The analysis was conducted using high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) and spectrophotometric techniques.

Regarding the identified phenolic compounds, the blackberries grown under the rain-shield recorded higher values of these components, with the exception of the ellagic acid. Significant higher value of the total phenolic and total anthocyanin content recorded in blackberries grown using the rain-shield was 396.44 and 75.85 mg/100 g FW. There was not significant effect of intensive growing technology on total antioxidant capacity in blackberries and ranged from 2.68 to 2.70 Trolox mmol/100 g FW.

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**Key words:** blackberries, cultivation techniques, phenolic acids, antioxidant capacity

## INTRODUCTION

Berries (e.g., blueberry, blackberry, and strawberry) are well known as 'super fruits' for their potential in the nutraceutical and functional food markets (Ding et al., 2006; Tulipani et al., 2008).

Owing to the specific nature of the present phytochemicals, the low caloric value and the high contents of fibre and essential micro-nutrients, the fruits possess antioxidant qualities that help alleviate adverse effects of the oxidation stress in the cell, thus reducing the risk of chronic disease occurrence.



(Tanovi et al., 2012).  
 (Scalzo et al., 2005).  
 1.  
 (2013–2014 .)  
 " (Rubus subg. Rubus Watson).  
 2006 .  
 (43°53'N  
 20°20' E , 290 m . .)  
 3.0 m  
 1.5 m,  
 4  
 2.

accompanied by the introduction of the rain shield resulted in increasing the share of quality fruits, i.e. prevention of the rot, but it has also made it possible to perform the harvesting in continuity, regardless of the external conditions (Tanovi et al., 2012). Apart from the strong impact that the species of fruit has on the anti-oxidant features of the fruit, the cultivation conditions of the plant (environmental and cultivation techniques) must not be neglected (Scalzo et al., 2005).

The research was aimed at establishing the indirect impact of the new cultivation technique (Rain shield) of blackberry on the biological activity of the fruit, i.e. its nutritive and anti-oxidant values.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 1. Plant material and experimental design

The investigation was conducted over a two-year period (2013–2014) in a orchard of ' a anska Bestrna' cultivar of blackberry (Rubus subg. Rubus Watson). The experimental orchard was established in 2006 and was located at Gornja Gorevnica (43° 53'N latitude, 20° 20' E longitude, 290 m altitude) near a ak, Western Serbia.

The blackberry were planted in rows spaced 3.0 m apart with plants set at 1.5 m apart in the row, and trained as a four-wire trellis. Plastic arches were placed on the existing trellis structure in the blackberry. The arches were covered using 150 μ thick foil, forming the shape of an umbrella (Rain shield). The trial was conducted using a randomised block design and it included four replications of each treatment. Fertilization, weed control, and irrigation practices standard for the region were provided during both seasons.

### 2. Determination of Phenolic Acids, Flavonols and Anthocyanins

Samples were analyzed using an

HPLC (Agilent Technologies, Agilent 1260 series HPLC (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA, USA) ChemStation, ZORBAX Eclipse Plus C18 (4.6 150 mm, 3.5 μm). Hertog et al. (1992). 5 μL 30 °C. 1% 0 10 min, 10% B A; 10 25 min, 15 50% B A; 25 30 min, 50–80% B A; 30 32 min, 10% B ( 0.5 ml/min)

HPLC 260 nm, 280 nm, 329 nm, 360 nm 520 nm. UV/Vis mg/100 g FW.

### 3. (TPH)

Folin-Ciocalteu (Singleton et al., 1999; Liu et al., 2002) 100 g (mg (4.0 g) 40 ml (80% v/v) 2 15 min 3500 rpm. Minisart 0.45 μm . 40 μL 3.16 ml

Agilent 1260 series HPLC (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA, USA) linked to a ChemStation data handling system, using a ZORBAX Eclipse Plus C18 column (4.6 150 mm, 3.5 μm particles). Samples were prepared according to the method of Hertog et al. (1992). Injection volume was 5 μL and the temperature was set at 30 °C. Solvent A was 1% formic acid and solvent B was acetonitrile. The gradient used was as follows: 0 10 min, 10% of B in A; 10 25 min, 15 50% of B in A; 25 30 min, 50–80% of B in A; 30 32 min, 10% of B in A. By using this gradient (flow rate 0.5 ml/min), a good purity and separation was achieved in fruit samples. The HPLC equipment was used with a diode array detector (DAD). Phenolic compounds were detected at 260 nm, 280 nm, 329 nm, 360 nm, and 520 nm. Phenolic compounds were identified according to peak retention time and UV/Vis spectra by comparing them with those of the standards. The quantities of the different phenolic compounds were based on peak areas, and expressed as mg/100 g FW.

### 3. Determination of Total Phenolics (TPH)

The TPH content was determined using a modified Folin-Ciocalteu colorimetric method (Singleton et al., 1999; Liu et al., 2002) and the results were expressed as milligrams of gallic acid equivalents per 100 g of fresh weight (mg GAE/100 g FW). Grinded sample (4.0 g) was stirred vigorously with 40 mL of extraction solution consisting of methanol and distilled water (80% v/v) and was kept for 2 hours in the dark at room temperature. The mixture was centrifuged in two sequential times for 15 min at 3500 rpm, and supernatant was filtered through a 0.45 μm Minisart filter before analysis.

A 40 μL of fruit extracts or gallic acid standard solution was mixed with 3.16 mL of distilled water whereupon 200 μL of Folin-Ciocalteu reagent was added and



200  $\mu$ L  
,  
Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>.  
2  
765 nm  
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4.  
( )

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(Torre and Barritt, 1977; Liu et al.,  
2002).  
, 20 g e  
40 ml  
(95% /1.5 N HCl, 85:15).  
30 ml  
70 ml  
2  
200 mL.  
510  
700 nm  
UV/VIS (PU 8740 UV/VIS,  
) 1-  
.  
100 g (mg cyn-3-glu/100 g  
FW),  
26 900 L/cm/mol  
449.2 g/mol.

5.  
( )  
ABTS  
Arnao et al. (1999).  
ml 4.9 mM  
5 ml 14 mM  
ABTS.  
16  
(25  $\pm$  1° ).  
,  
0.700  $\pm$   
0.02 734 nm,

allowed to stand for 8 min before 600  $\mu$ L  
of 20% Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> solution was added.

Solution was well mixed and absorbance  
at 765 nm against an appropriate blank  
was determined after 2 hours. Data are  
reported as means for at least three  
replications.

#### 4. Determination of Total Anthocyanin (TAN)

The monomeric anthocyanin  
pigment content of the aqueous extracts  
was determined using the previously  
described pH-differential method (Torre  
and Barritt, 1977; Liu et al., 2002). Briefly,  
20 g of grinded fruit was blended with 40  
mL of extracting solvent (95% ethanol/1.5  
N HCl, 85:15). The extract was collected  
by filtration with an additional 30 ml of  
solvent washing. The residue was soaked  
with 70 mL of extracting solvent, and the  
extract was collected after 2h. The total  
extracts were pooled and brought up to  
200 mL. A UV/VIS spectrophotometer (PU  
8740 UV/VIS, England) and a 1-cm path  
length disposable cell were used for  
spectral measurements at 510 and 700  
nm. Pigment content was calculated as  
milligrams cyanidin-3-glucoside per 100 g  
of fresh weight (*mg cyn-3-glu/100 g FW*)  
using an extinction coefficient of 26,900  
L/cm/mol and molecular weight of 449.2  
g/mol.

#### 5. Determination of the Total Antioxidant Capacity

Antioxidant capacity (TAC) was  
determined by the ABTS assays  
according to Arnao et al. (1999). ABTS  
solution was freshly prepared by adding 5  
ml of a 4.9 mM potassium persulphate  
solution to 5 ml of a 14 mM ABTS solution  
and the resulting solution was kept for 16  
h in dark at room temperature (25 $\pm$ 1 °C).

This solution was diluted with methanol to  
yield an absorbance of 0.700  $\pm$  0.02 at  
734 nm and the same solution was used  
for the antioxidant assay. One milliliter of

950  $\mu$ l of ABTS solution and 50  $\mu$ l of the samples. This solution was vortexed for 10 sec and the absorbance was recorded at 734 nm after 6 min using UV/VIS spectrophotometer (PU 8740 UV/VIS, England) which was compared with the control ABTS solution. The results were expressed as mmol Trolox equivalents per 100 g of fresh matter (mmol/100 g FW).

**6. Statistical analysis**  
 All tests were performed in triplicate and the results are presented as mean  $\pm$  standard error of mean (SE). Differences between mean values were compared by Duncan's Multiple Range test in two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using MSTAT-C statistical computer package (Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA). Differences with *p* values of 0.05 were considered insignificant.

reaction mixture of standard and extracts comprised 950  $\mu$ l of ABTS solution and 50  $\mu$ l of the samples. This solution was vortexed for 10 sec and the absorbance was recorded at 734 nm after 6 min using UV/VIS spectrophotometer (PU 8740 UV/VIS, England) which was compared with the control ABTS solution. The results were expressed as mmol Trolox equivalents per 100 g of fresh matter (mmol/100 g FW).

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Phenolic Acids, Flavonols and Anthocyanins

Table 1 shows the profile of free phenolic acids determined in fruit of 'a anska Bestrna' blackberry.

The dimer of gallic acid-ellagic acid, four hydroxybenzoic acids, including protocatechuic, 4-hydroxybenzoic, vanillic and gallic acids, as well as three hydroxycinnamic acids, including p-coumaric, caffeic and ferulic acids, were identified and quantified in the fruit (Table 1).

1.

**Table 1. Phenolic acids content in fruit of ' a anska Bestrna' blackberry**

Phenolic acids (mg/100 g FW)	Rain shield		Standard		Mean of growing year		Mean of cultivation techniques	
	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	Rain shield	Standard
	Protocatechuic	1.52±0.17 a	1.82±0.15 a	1.29±0.71 a	0.97±0.21 a	1.67±0.12 a	1.13±0.34 b	1.41±0.33 a
4-hydroxybenzoic	0.36±0.01 a	0.46±0.09 a	0.46±0.09 a	0.41±0.06 a	0.41±0.05 a	0.43±0.05 a	0.44±0.04 a	0.41±0.05 a
Vanillic	1.04±0.54 a	1.02±0.33 a	0.78±0.14 a	0.39±0.02 a	1.03±0.28 a	0.58±0.11 b	0.91±0.26 a	0.70±0.20 a
/Ellagic	6.94±0.92 a	6.88±1.12 a	3.39±1.03 a	6.00±0.29 a	6.91±0.65 a	4.70±0.76 b	5.16±1.01 b	6.44±0.55 a
/Gallic	2.79±0.13 a	2.56±0.59 a	3.38±0.46 a	2.89±0.11 a	2.68±0.28 b	3.14±0.24 a	3.09±0.25 a	2.73±0.28 a
-	0.67±0.18 a	0.59±0.05 a	0.33±0.19 a	0.40±0.02 a	0.63±0.08 a	0.37±0.09 b	0.51±0.14 a	0.50±0.05 a
p-coumaric	0.37±0.02 a	0.33±0.04 a	0.43±0.05 a	0.41±0.01 a	0.35±0.02 a	0.42±0.02 a	0.40±0.03 a	0.37±0.03 a
/Caffeic	0.39±0.02 a	0.33±0.01 a	0.41±0.06 a	0.38±0.01 a	0.37±0.02 a	0.40±0.03 a	0.41±0.04 a	0.36±0.01 a
/Ferulic								

(P 0.05)

For each analysed compound mean values within each row (in the treatment and interaction) followed by the same small letter are not significantly different according Duncan's Multiple Range test (P 0.05)  
FW – /fresh weight of fruit

Phenolic acids subjected to analysis of variance showed significant effect of growing year on content vanillic and ellagic acids.

The content of protocatechuic, 4-hydroxybenzoic, vanillic and gallic acids ranged from 0.97±0.21 to 1.82±0.15, 0.36±0.01 to 0.46±0.09, 0.39±0.02 to 1.04±0.54 and 2.56±0.59 to 3.38±0.46 mg/100 g FW, respectively.

The comparison of the different cultivation techniques treatments showed that contents of hydroxybenzoic acids were higher in Rain shield treatment. Higher contents of hydroxybenzoic acids, except protocatechuic and gallic acids were recorded in the second growing year.

The content of p-coumaric, caffeic and ferulic acids ranged from 0.33±0.19 to 0.67±0.18, 0.33±0.04 to 0.43±0.05 and 0.33±0.01 to 0.41±0.06 mg/100 g FW, respectively. Higher contents of hydroxycinnamic acids were recorded in blackberries subjected to the Rain shield cultivation techniques, in the second growing year. The growing year significantly affected content of cyanidin (Table 2).

2.

**Table 2. Flavonols and anthocyanidins content in fruit of ' a anska Bestrna' blackberry**

Treatment		Flavonols		Anthocyanidins (mg/100 g FW)	
		/Quercetin		/Cyanidin	
Growing year (A)	/First	0.29±0.04 a		3.65±0.07 b	
	/Second	0.32±0.03 a		5.06±0.62 a	
Cultivation techniques (B)	/Rain cap	0.34±0.04 a		4.87±0.68 a	
	/Standard	0.27±0.03 a		3.83±0.13 a	
ANOVA					
A		ns		*	
B		ns		ns	
A × B		*		ns	

*p* 0.05

small letter are insignificantly different at the *p* 0.05 by Duncan's Multiple Range test

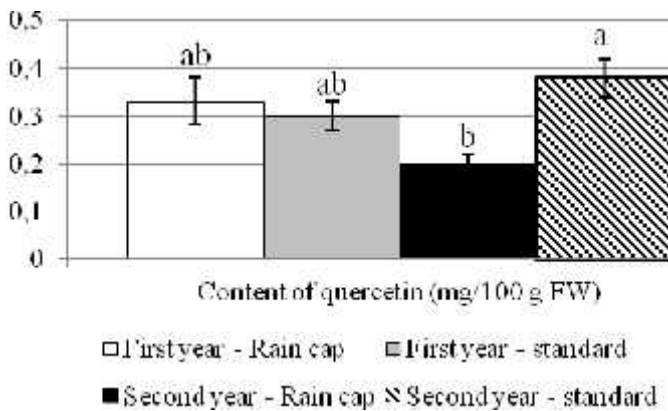
ns – / non significant differences

FW – / fresh weight.

1).

0.34±0.03 3.65±0.07 4.87±0.68  
mg/100 g FW,

The interaction effect of the growing year and cultivation techniques produced significant differences in the content of quercetin (Figure 1). The quercetin and cyanidin contents ranged from 0.27±0.04 to 0.34±0.03 and 3.65±0.07 to 4.87±0.68 mg/100 g FW, respectively and were higher in blackberries undergoing the Rain shield treatments. It was also observed that the quercetin and cyanidin contents were higher in the second growing year.



. 1.

(A × B)

**Fig. 1. Content of quercetin (A × B)**

- | The analysis of the interaction

(0.38 ± 0.04 mg/100 g FW)  
 (0.20 ± 0.02 mg/100 g FW)

- effect of the growing year and cultivation techniques inferred that the quercetin content was highest in standard cultivation techniques (0.38±0.04 mg/100 g FW) during the second year, and lowest with the Rain shield (0.20±0.02 mg/100 g FW) in the same year.

2.  
 ( 3).  
 ( 2).  
 3

**2. Total Antioxidant Capacity, Total Phenolics and Anthocyanin**  
 Analysis of variance showed significant effect of growing year on TAC and TPH whereas the cultivation techniques significantly affected the TPH (Table 3).  
 - The interaction effect of growing year and cultivation techniques showed significant differences among the TAC and TPH (Figure 2).

**Table 3. Total antioxidant capacity, total anthocyanins and phenolic content in fruit of blackberry ‘ a anska Bestrna’**

Treatment		TPH	TAN	TAC
		mg/100 g FW		Trolox, mmol/100 g FW
Growing year (A)	/First	373.99±32.12 a	70.22±2.55 a	2.92±0.05 a
	/Second	327.68±12.33 b	69.80±3.23 a	2.46±0.06 b
Cultivation techniques (B)	Rain cap	396.44±23.69 a	75.85±1.56 a	2.68±0.16 a
	Standard	305.24±2.29 b	64.17±0.92 b	2.70±0.05 a
A		*	ns	*
B		*	*	ns
A × B		*	ns	*

*p* 0.05

/ Values within each column followed by the same small letter are insignificantly different at the *p* 0.05 by Duncan's Multiple Range test  
 ns – / non significant differences  
 FW – / fresh weight.

2.46±0.06  
 2.92±0.05  
 305.24±2.29  
 396.44±23.69  
 64.17±0.92  
 75.85±1.56 mg/100 g

The TAC, TPH and TAN in blackberries ranged from 2.46±0.06 to 2.92±0.05 Trolox mmol/100 g FW, 305.24±2.29 to 396.44±23.69 and 64.17±0.92 to 75.85±1.56 mg/100 g FW, respectively. The higher chemical



(Scalbert et al., 2005). (*Rubus*) (Kahkonen et al., 2001; Proteggente et al., 2002).

Zadernowski et al. (2005),

Sellappan et al. (2002). Clark e al. (2002)

(Mullen et al., 2002).

(Erlund, 2004)

(Kris-Etherton et al., 2002).

(Erlund, 2004; Kahkonen et al., 2001). Milivojevi et al. (2011)

damage associated with various etiologies of neurological and chronic diseases (Scalbert et al., 2005). Berry fruit (including *Rubus* species) contain high concentrations of several classes of phenolic compounds, including phenolic acids, anthocyanins, and flavonols (Kahkonen et al., 2001; Proteggente et al., 2002). A high variation of phenolic contents of blackberry cultivars was found in the literature.

The acids discovered in the blackberries in our study - the protocatechuic, 4-hydroxybenzoic, vanillic, ellagic, gallic, *p*-coumaric, caffeic and ferulic acids, represent a significantly lower number of phenolic acids than the one presented in the results obtained by Zadernowski et al. (2005), who identified twenty phenolic acids in blackberries. Our results show that ellagic acid, caffeic acid, and ferulic acid levels were lower than those reported in blackberry Sellappan et al. (2002). As opposed to our results, Clark e al. (2002) observed higher quantities of ellagic acid in blackberris. In general, free ellagic acid levels observed in blackberry are quite low in this study, and their detection is probably the result of acid hydrolysis products of ellagitannin breakdown (Mullen et al., 2002).

The term flavonoid refers to flavonols and flavones, with quercetin being the most abundant (Erlund, 2004) and widespread throughout the plant being found in fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds, flowers, and bark (Kris-Etherton et al., 2002).

Quercetin has been studied more thoroughly than other flavonoids, not only because of its abundance, but because it has been reported to exhibit antioxidative, anticarcinogenic, anti-inflammatory, anti-aggregatory, and vasodilating effects (Erlund, 2004; Kahkonen et al., 2001). Milivojevi et al. (2011) reported that

quercetin was not detected in any of the blackberry samples in their study, but several studies have already reported the presence of quercetin glycosides in blackberries (Bilyk and Sapers, 1986; Siriwoharn et al., 2004), which has also been confirmed by the results obtained in our study. Our results show that content of quercetin was higher than those reported in blackberry Clark et al. (2002).

The contents of quercetin and cyanidin were higher in second growing year, which may be related to genetic differences, maturity at harvest, cultural practices, different extraction and laboratory methods employed (Clark et al., 2002). Wang and Lin (2000) reported that delphinidin, cyanidin, pelargonidin, malvidin, and peonidin are the major anthocyanins found in berries.

Various phytochemical components, including flavonoids, phenylpropanoids, and phenolic acids are known to be responsible for TAC in fruits and vegetables (Rice-Evans and Miller, 1986). Garcia-Alonso et al. (2004) reported that the greatest TAC obtained by TEAC method were persimmon ( $406 \mu\text{mol/g}$ ), blackberry ( $192 \mu\text{mol/g}$ ), blueberry ( $187 \mu\text{mol/g}$ ) and strawberry-tree fruit ( $163 \mu\text{mol/g}$ ). Pantelidis et al. (2007) reported that blackberry 'Hull Thornless' gave the highest TAC of the examined cultivars of raspberries, blackberries, red currants, gooseberries and Cornelian cherries.

In this study the TAC of blackberries was generally lower than the reported by Moyer et al. (2002), Siriwoharn et al. (2004) and Clark et al. (2002). Namely, plants grown in cool day and night temperatures generally had the lowest antioxidant capacity (Wang, 2007).

The comparison of the differences in TPH and TAN related to the growing



(Sellapan et al., 2002).  
Wang Lin (2000),  
338 mg/100 g FW.  
" Milivojevi  
et al. (2011)  
, Benvenuti et al. (2004)  
192.8  
351.7 mg/100 g FW,  
(Skrede and Wrolstad, 2002), Wang Lin  
(2000)  
(Hosseinian et al., 2007).  
Benvenuti  
et al. (2004).  
(Duthie et al., 2003).

year revealed that these were higher in the first than in the second year, suggesting that the growing season, climate and region have an influence on the antioxidant power of blackberries (Sellapan et al., 2002). In the study conducted by Wang and Lin (2000) the total TPH content of berries and leaves varied from 91 to 338 mg/100 g of FW.

Our results revealed a higher TPH content in ' a anska Bestrna' blackberry than that reported by Milivojevi et al. (2011) for the same cultivar under similar agro-ecological conditions.

On the other hand, Benvenuti et al. (2004) reported that content of TPH in some thornless blackberry cultivars grown in Italy ranged from 192.8 to 351.7 mg/100 g FW, which is similar to the results of our study.

The anthocyanin content of blackberries compares favourably with other fruits (Skrede and Wrolstad, 2002), and Wang and Lin (2000) have shown that TAC of blackberries is highly correlated with the anthocyanin pigment content. However, many factors such as genes, soil type, light, temperature, and agronomic conditions affect anthocyanin composition in plants (Hosseinian et al., 2007). Our results show that the TAN contents were similar to those reported in the thornless blackberry Benvenuti et al. (2004).

However, even when good experimental evidence exists, results need to be interpreted with caution in relation to human health benefits, as polyphenols may have limited bioavailability and may also be extensively metabolised (Duthie et al., 2003).

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study indicates that blackberries are a rich source of natural

- antioxidants and that intensification of the
- cultivation technology of blackberry
- contributes to an increase in the poly-
- phenol contents. On the other hand, total
- phenolic content and antioxidant activity
- varied among the different ecological
- conditions used in this study.

- Consumption of blackberries can
- provide a good source of antioxidants,
- and therefore they may have potential for
- use in the development of food
- ingredients that are beneficial to human
- health.

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