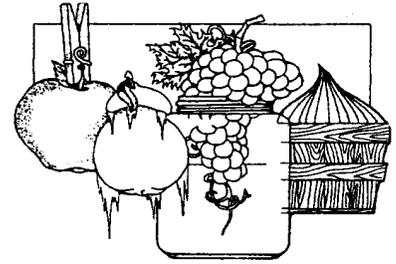


Quality for Keeps



Information for those who produce and preserve food

Blackberry summer sizzles with flavor

When the first blackberries ripen, most are consumed by the handful on the spot. For pizzazz, add fresh juicy blackberries to spinach and green salads or fruit cups. Turn later pickings into blackberry jam and jelly, and preserve the extras for winter pies and cobblers. One crate of blackberries will yield 24 quarts of berries.

Blackberry Varieties. Native blackberries are prevalent throughout Missouri. With good rainfall, the flavor is prized for jellies and pies. Domestic varieties may be thorned or thornless.

- **Thorned** blackberries include: Darrow and Shawnee. Darrow, (the hardiest of all blackberries), is a small or medium sized berry which ripens in late June to early July. Shawnee is a large, shiny black, high-quality berry that can be harvested over a four-week period.
- **Thornless** varieties include: Arapaho, Apache, Navaho and Ouachita. Most ripen in late June and early July.

Treat blackberries, boysenberries, dewberries, loganberries and youngberries in a similar manner.

Preserve fruits as soon as possible after harvest and at their peak of ripeness. Select fully ripe, firm berries. Wash carefully in cold water, discarding soft, under-ripe or defective fruit, leaves and stems. Rinse, but do not soak berries in water. Drain.

Freezing. Freeze blackberries with sugar, in a sugar water syrup, or unsweetened. Unsweetened fruits lose quality faster than those packed in sugar or sugar syrups.

Syrup pack. Pack whole berries into containers and cover with 40-50% syrup, depending on sweetness of fruit. Leave headspace, seal and freeze.

Sugar pack. Gently mix 3/4 cup sugar with 1 quart (1-1/3 pounds) berries. Fill containers. Leave 1/2-inch headspace, seal and freeze.

Unsweetened pack. Tray freeze; then pack berries into containers, leaving no headspace. Seal and freeze.



Canning. Blackberries, blueberries, currants, elderberries, gooseberries, huckleberries, mulberries, and raspberries may be canned.

For each 7-quart canner load, use an average of 12 pounds of fresh, whole berries. For each 9-pint canner load, prepare an average of 8 pounds of fresh, whole berries.

Choose ripe, sweet berries with even color.

Wash 1 to 2 quarts of berries at a time. Drain, cap and stem if necessary. For gooseberries, snip off heads and tails with scissors. Prepare and boil preferred syrup, if desired. Add 1/2 cup syrup, juice or water to each clean jar.

Hot pack. For blueberries, currants, elderberries, gooseberries and huckleberries: Heat berries in boiling water for 30 seconds and drain. Fill jars and cover with hot juice. Leave 1/2-inch headspace.

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Canning berries *(Cont'd from cover page)*

If packing berries in jars HOT at altitudes under 1,000 feet, process pints OR quarts for 15 minutes in a boiling water bath canner.

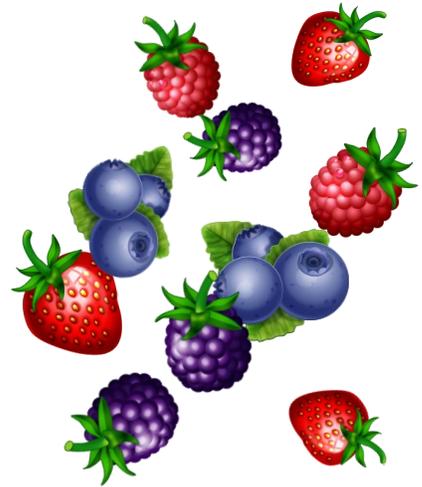
If packing HOT at altitudes over 1,000 feet, process pints OR quarts for 20 minutes in a boiling water bath canner.

Raw pack. Fill jars with any raw berries; shake berries down gently while filling jars. Cover with hot

syrup, juice or water. Leave 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids.

If packing berries in jars raw, process pints for 15 minutes and quarts for 20 minutes at altitudes under 1,000 feet. At altitudes over 1,000 feet and packing raw, process pints for 20 minutes and quarts for 25 minutes in a boiling water bath canner.

Source, Quality for Keeps: Fruitful Canning
<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/GH1455>.



Extracting juice made easy

Extracting juice is easy, but novices can avoid this step by preparing fruit jams, or purchasing frozen 100% grape juice. Follow the recipe in the pectin box, or at the National Center for Home Food Preservation:
http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_07/grape_jelly_frozen.html.

Unless using added pectin, use 1/4 slightly under-ripe fruit and 3/4 just ripe fruit. Prepare fruit in small batches, enough for one recipe. Sort the fruit, discarding all damaged portions. Wash fruits, but do not remove skins, since the pectin is more concentrated there. Cut into small pieces. Wash berries carefully to prevent loss of juice. Drain, remove caps and stems.

Place fruit into a flat-bottomed saucepan and add cold water. For berries and grapes, use only enough water to prevent scorching. Crush soft fruits to start the flow of juice.

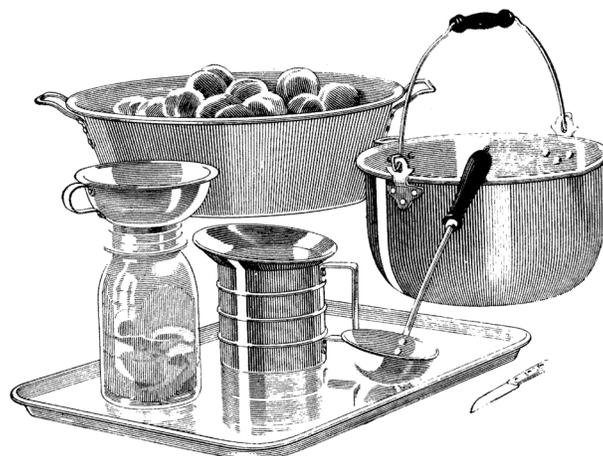
Bring to a boil on high heat. Stir to prevent scorching. Reduce heat.

Grapes and berries need 10 minutes or less to cook until soft. Do not overcook; excess boiling will destroy the pectin, flavor and color.

Pour everything into a damp jelly bag and suspend the bag to drain the juice. If a jelly bag is not available, dampen a 2 foot square piece of cotton, and use it to line a

large colander. Carefully pour the cooked fruit and juice into the lined colander. Gather the four corners of the cloth and tie together. Gently twist the closed cotton square. The clearest jelly comes from juice that has dripped through a jelly bag without pressing or squeezing.

Source: "So Easy to Preserve," 5th ed. 2006. Bulletin 989, Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia, Athens.



Ceramic or glass cooktops provide canning challenges

Some ceramic and glass cook-top manufacturers:

- ☞ Advise against canning on their tops.
- ☞ Have no restrictions at all.
- ☞ Stipulate that the canner diameter be within a certain diameter of their burner.

Check with the manufacturer to determine the recommendations for each cook-top model. Most have toll-free phone numbers listed in their manual or websites with contact information.

The issues:

1. The general recommendation for canning is that the canner not be more than 2 inches wider than the burner or heating element. With a ceramic or glass stovetop, this is an even greater concern because of damage that can occur. When the canner sits on the hot burner, it reflects heat back down on the stovetop. When the canner is wider it reflects and traps more heat.

These non-burner surfaces are not designed to handle that much heat and can be damaged: discoloration, burner damage, cracking the stovetop, or even fusing the metal pot to the glass stovetop.

2. Even if a manufacturer says a burner/cooktop can be used for canning, the cook-top can be

scratched if the aluminum canner is slid or pulled across the cooktop. Avoid sliding or moving canner, especially when it is full and heavy.

3. Many glass-top stoves have auto-shutoffs and this can prevent sufficient heating. The stove is designed to shut off when heat is excessive. But if the heat shuts off during the canning process, the required continuous processing time cannot be reached, resulting in food that is under-processed and unsafe.

The process time must be continuous at the intended temperature, or microorganisms may survive. Also, if the pressure drops quickly, most likely liquid will be lost from the jar, (it will spill over from the area of higher pressure inside the jar to the lower pressure now in the canner around the jar).

4. A stove with a smooth top requires a flat bottom canner to work properly. For boiling water canning, a large, flat, smooth-bottomed stock kettle can be used by inserting a rack inside the kettle to keep jars off the bottom of the pot. Canning rings can also be used to elevate the jars. The pot must be big enough to fill the water to 1-2 inches above the tops of the jars and to allow boiling water to circulate around the jars.

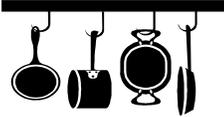
Try these tips:

- Start with hot water and a lid on top of the pan. It will take less time for the water to come to a boil.
- Use the largest surface element possible.
- Always use flat surface bottomed cookware – medium (gauge) weight is best.
- Make sure the pan diameter does not extend beyond an inch over the surface element.
- Do not use the surface elements continuously all day for canning. Built-in sensors allow the element to cycle on and off to keep the glass from getting too hot and damaging the cooktop. By fluctuating the temperature, the bacteria is not eliminated in the canning process.
- The maximum weight of the canner and its contents should not exceed 50 pounds.

Sources: Burning Issue: Canning on Smooth Cooktops, National Center for Home Food Preservation. <http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/nchfp/factsheets/smoothtops.html>

Issues with canning on ceramic or glass stovetops Janet Hackert, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist, Harrison County, University of Missouri Extension, <http://missourifamilies.org/features/foodsafetyarticles/fdsftv38.htm>

THE RECIPE BOX



Blackberry Jelly (with powdered pectin)



- 3-1/2 cups blackberry juice (about 3 quart boxes)
- 1 package powdered pectin
- 4-1/2 cups sugar

Procedure: Sterilize canning jars and prepare two-piece canning lids according to manufacturer's directions.

To prepare juice. Sort and wash fully ripe berries; remove any stems or caps. Crush berries and extract juice.

To make jelly. Measure juice into a kettle. Add pectin and stir well. Place on high heat and, stirring constantly, bring quickly to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down. Add sugar, continue stirring, and heat again to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute. Remove from heat; skim off foam quickly. Pour hot jelly immediately into hot, sterile jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel; adjust two-piece metal canning lids. Process pints and half-pints in a boiling water canner for 5 minutes at altitudes under 1,000 feet. Process pints and half-pints in a boiling water canner for 10 minutes at altitudes over 1,000 feet.

Yield: approx. 5-6 half-pint jars.

Source: How to Make Jellies, Jams and Preserves at Home. Home and Garden Bulletin No. 56. Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture. 1982 reprint. National Center for Home Food Preservation, June 2005.

Quality for Keeps, published monthly, April through October, is made available to residents of East Central and Urban regions in Missouri by their Extension Council. Contact your county Extension office to subscribe, or visit our website: <http://missouri.extension.edu/franklin>. Questions may be directed to:

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