

Household Suggestions

The Preserving of Berries

By Bertha E. Shapleigh

Let us first consider just what dangers must be overcome before it is certain that fruit put into cans or jars will "keep" for an indefinite period. The germs which are in the food, or on the utensils, must be destroyed, and every precaution must be taken to prevent other germs at any future time from entering the jars containing the fruit. The air is full of organisms which, under favorable conditions, grow and produce unpleasant flavors and odors, so when the statement is made that air must be excluded in order that the contents of a jar may not "spoil," it is not the oxygen, as was formerly thought, which causes the trouble, but the bacteria and yeasts which are in the air.

The old-fashioned way of preserving was to put the fruit in a very heavy syrup, a pound of fruit and a pound of sugar. This method successfully keeps bacteria from entering, but is expensive, takes away much of the fresh flavor of the fruit, and fruit treated in that way is not always so digestible as it should be.

If it were possible during the season of berries to preserve a few each day, or to make a half dozen tumblers of jelly at a time, the work would be much less laborious and the results better, as then the fruit could be used when at its best. A mistake is made in thinking that berries which are overripe are suitable for jelly. Berries in this condition may be cooked and used in a day or two, but will not keep, and do not stiffen into a jelly. Berries picked immediately after a rain are not good for canning or for jelly.

Canning and Jelly Making

The following utensils are necessary for all kinds of preserving: A ten or twelve quart porcelain-lined kettle, a white enameled ladle, a long-handled spoon, a wide-mouthed funnel, a colander, several pans, paring knives, a wooden masher, scales, and one or two cloth bags through which to strain the jelly. If many jars are to be filled, a clothes boiler will be convenient for sterilizing them.

Have a rack in the bottom of the boiler, and on it place jars and covers, and completely cover them with cold water. Bring the water slowly to the boiling point and boil for twenty minutes. Have fresh rubbers and scald them by dipping them in the boiling water. The most important thing to remember is that every utensil must be perfectly clean, and no dust which can be prevented shall be allowed to rise during the time of putting the fruit in the jars. Great care must be taken in filling the jars. Do not take them from the boiling water and set them on a cold table, or in a draft; otherwise they will crack and sometimes break. A break is often better than a crack, as a crack sometimes is so small that it escapes one's notice until the jar falls apart and the contents are lost. Also care must be taken to have the syrup boiling, and to fill the jars completely, even to overflowing.

Raspberries and Blackberries—For canning raspberries, blackberries and a combination of raspberries and currants, take three quarts of sugar to six quarts of berries. Put one quart of berries in the preserving kettle and heat slowly. Press out the juice with a wooden masher, strain through cheesecloth, and return to the kettle with the sugar. Stir until the sugar is dissolved, and when the syrup begins to boil add the remaining berries. Heat slowly and boil for ten minutes, counting from the time that the mass begins to bubble. Put into jars, and, when it is slightly cool, seal tightly.

Blueberries—Blueberries are not at all difficult to can. For six quarts of berries use one pint of sugar, and one cupful of water. Put all into a preserving kettle, heat slowly and boil twenty minutes, counting from the time boiling begins.

Strawberries—Strawberries are very hard to preserve and still retain their flavor and color. The berries are inclined to shrink and it is thought that they are best preserved in the sun.

Pick over the berries and wash carefully before hulling. Put them into sterilized jars, having the jars nearly full. Make a heavy syrup, using as many pounds of sugar as there are pounds of fruit, and half as much water as sugar. Boil for fifteen minutes. Pour sugar over the berries, leaving the jar filled to overflowing. Set the jar in a pan, cover with glass covers, and place in the sun for three successive days, being careful to take them indoors as soon as the sun goes down. If this method is pursued the color and flavor will be kept very satisfactorily.

Raspberries—Raspberries may be preserved by the same process described above for preserving strawberries.

Jellies

Currants, crabapples and apples are the fruits which jelly without trouble.

Fruit Juices, Jams and Left-overs

Fruit juices are of the greatest use in flavoring ice cream, making sherbets and iced drinks, such as punch and fruit cups. Grape and currant juices are particularly good, and may be canned with or without sugar. Extract the juice as in making jelly, boil it and pour it into jars when it is boiling hot.

Delicious jams can be made of blackberries, raspberries, currants, or currants and raspberries mixed. Boil the fruit in a very little water, until it is tender and is transparent. Then add an equal weight of sugar and boil for twenty minutes.

When one has a few strawberries or currants, not quite enough to put into jars, cook them slowly in an equal quantity of sugar for from twenty to forty minutes. Use at once over cream cheese, with salad. This is a very good imitation of the imported and domestic jam and jelly known familiarly as Bar-le-Duc.

Some Further Uses for Berries in Cookery

Blueberry Ice Cream—To one quart of cream add three-fourths of a cupful of sugar and one tablespoonful of vanilla. Freeze to almost a paste. Add two cupfuls of good ripe blueberries and continue freezing until it is firm.

Blueberry Muffins—Cream together a fourth of a cupful of butter and a fourth of a cupful of sugar. Add one well-beaten egg and beat all together until it is very light. Sift two cupfuls of flour with two teaspoonfuls of baking powder and add to the first mixture, alternately, with one cupful of milk. Beat well, add one cupful of blueberries, turn into buttered muffin tins, and bake twenty-five minutes in a moderately hot oven.

Swedish Fruit Pudding—Add to three cupfuls of fruit juice, currant, raspberry, blueberry or blackberry, sufficient sugar to sweeten (from one-half to three-fourths of a cupful), an inch piece of stick cinnamon, and the grated rind of one lemon. Boil for one minute, add half a cupful of potato flour, or one-third of a cupful of cornstarch (diluted with cold water) and boil for about five minutes until it is clear. Turn into a dish and serve cold with cream.

Raspberry and Currant Shortcake—Pick over, wash and slightly mash one quart of currants and one cupful of raspberries. Cover with one cupful of powdered sugar and place in a warm place until ready to serve. Sift together two cupfuls of flour, four teaspoonfuls of baking powder, half a teaspoonful of salt, and two tablespoonfuls of sugar. With the tips of your fingers work into this four tablespoonfuls of lard and butter mixed, or any desired shortening. Add one slightly beaten egg, and enough milk (about half a cupful) to moisten to a soft dough which can be handled. Put on a floured board, pat and roll out to one-third of an inch in thickness, and cut two pieces to fit a round layer cake pan. Place one piece on the top of the other, having the lower piece well spread with melted butter. Bake for twenty minutes in a hot oven. Remove to a plate, put the currants and raspberries between the layers and on the top and serve at once. Plain sweetened cream, with a slight grating of nutmeg, or whipped cream may be used.

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