

Fruit for Preserving

The selection of fruit for preserving is one of the first steps in obtaining successful results. The flavor of fruit is not developed until it is fully ripe, but the time at which the fruit is at its best for canning, jelly making, etc., is just before it is perfectly ripe. In all soft fruits, the fermentative stage follows closely upon the perfectly ripe stage; therefore it is better to use under-ripe fruit rather than over-ripe fruit. This is especially important in jelly making for another reason also: in over-ripe fruit the pectin begins to lose its jelly-making quality.

All fruits should, if possible, be freshly picked for preserving, canning, and jelly making. No important fruit should be canned or preserved. Gnarly fruit may be used for jellies or marmalades by cutting out defective portions. Bruised spots should be cut out of peaches and pears. In selecting small-seeded fruits, like berries, for canning, those having a small proportion of seed to pulp should be chosen. In dry seasons, berries have a larger preparation of seeds to pulp than in a wet or normal season, and it is not wise to can or preserve such fruit unless the seeds are removed. The fruit should be rubbed through a sieve that is fine enough to keep back the seeds. The strained pulp can be preserved as a puree or marmalade.

When fruit is brought into the house, put it where it will keep cool and crisp until you are ready to use it. The preparation of fruit for the various processes of preserving is the second important step. System will do much to lighten the work.

CLEANLINESS IMPORTANT

Begin by having the kitchen swept and dusted thoroughly, that there need not be a large number of mold spores floating about. Dust with a damp cloth. Have plenty of hot water and pans in which jars and utensils may be sterilized. Have at hand all necessary utensils, towels, sugar, etc.

Prepare only as much fruit as can be cooked while it still retains its color and crispness. Before beginning to pare fruit have some syrup ready, if that is to be used, or if sugar is to be added to the fruit have it weighed or measured.

GOOSEBERRIES WITHOUT SUGAR

Remove stems and blossom ends from carefully selected ripe gooseberries, and put in a preserving kettle, with just enough water to come up through them, but not quite cover them. Let boil just long enough for

the gooseberries to turn from the original color to a clear yellow, and then pour into jars and seal immediately. Canned in this way they retain their natural, fresh flavor.—Mrs. B. T. White, Quebec.

SPICED BLACKBERRIES

To 5 qts. of blackberries add 1 qt. vinegar, 3 lbs. sugar, 1 tablespoonful cinnamon, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoonful each allspice and cloves. Put the spices in a cheese cloth bag and boil them with the berries until they are of the consistency of preserves. Remove the spice bag and can, not necessarily the air-tight.—Mrs. S. R. Burns, Hallowell, Ont.

PLUMS

Eight qts. of plums, 2 qts. of sugar, 1 pt. of water.

Nearly all kinds of plums can be cooked with the skins on. If it is desired to remove the skin of any variety, plunge them in boiling water for a few minutes. When the skins are left on, pick them thoroughly to prevent bursting.

Put the sugar and water into the preserving kettle and stir over the fire until the sugar is dissolved. Wash and drain the plums. Put some of the fruit in boiling syrup. Do not crowd it. Cook five minutes; fill and seal the jars. Put more fruit in the syrup. Continue in this manner until all the fruit is done. It may be that there will not be sufficient syrup toward the latter part of the work; for this reason it is well to have a little extra on the back of the stove.

CURRANT AND APPLE JELLY

The simplest method of making currant jelly is perhaps the following: Free the currants from leaves and large stems. Put them in the preserving kettle; crush a few with a wooden vegetable masher or spoon; heat slowly, stirring frequently.

When the currants are hot, crush them with the vegetable masher. Put a hair sieve or strainer over a large bowl; over this spread a double square of cheese cloth, turn the crushed fruit and juice into the cheese cloth, and let it drain as long as it dips, but do not use pressure. To hasten the process take the corners of the straining cloth firmly in the hands and lift from the sieve; move the contents by raising one side of the cloth and then the other. After this put the cloth over another bowl. Twist the ends together and press out as much juice as possible. This juice may be used to make a second quality of jelly.

The clear juice may be made into jelly at once, or it may be strained through a flannel bag. In any case,

the method of making jelly is the same.

Stir until the sugar is dissolved, then place over the fire; watch closely, and when it boils up draw it back and skim; put over the fire again, it will boil and skim once more; boil and skim a third time—then pour into hot glasses taken from the pan of water on the stove and set on a board. Place the board near a sunny window in a room where there is no dust. It is a great protection and advantage to have sheets of glass to lay on top of the tumblers. As soon as the jelly is set cover by one of the three methods given below.

APPLE JELLY

Wash, stem, and wipe the apples, being careful to clean the blossom end thoroughly. Cut into quarters and put into the preserving kettle. Barely cover with cold water (about 4 qts. of water to 8 of apples) and cook gently until the apples are soft and clear. Strain the juice and proceed as for currant jelly. There should be but three qts. of juice from 8 qts. of apples at 14 of water.

Apples vary in the percentage of sugar and acid they contain. A fine-flavored acid apple should be employed when possible. Apple jelly may be made at any time of the year, but winter apples are best and should be used when in their prime, i.e., from the fall to December or January. When it is found necessary to make apple jelly in the spring, add the juice of one lemon to every pint of apple juice.

COVERING JELLIES

Jellies are so rich in sugar that they are protected from bacteria and yeasts, but they must be covered carefully to protect them from mold spores and evaporation. The following methods of covering jellies are all good:

Have disks of thick white paper the size of the top of the glass. When the jelly is set, brush the top over with brandy or alcohol. Dip a disk of paper in the spirits and put it on the jelly. If the glasses have covers, put them on. If there are no covers, put disks of paper about half an inch larger in diameter than the top of the glass. Beat together the white of one egg and a tablespoon of cold water. Wet the paper covers with this mixture and put over the glass, pressing down the sides well to make them stick to the glass; or the covers may be dipped in white wash and tied on the glasses, but they must be cut a little larger than when the white of egg is used.

A PARAFFIN COVER

A thick coating of paraffin makes a good cover, but not quite so safe as the paper dipped in brandy or alcohol, because the spirits destroy any mold spores that may happen to rest on the jelly. If such spores are covered with the paraffin they may develop under it. However, the paper wet with spirits could be put on first and the paraffin poured over it.

If paraffin is used, break it into pieces and put in a cup. Set the cup in a pan of warm water on the back of the stove. In a few moments it will be melted enough to cover the jelly. Have the coating about a fourth of an inch thick. In cooling, the paraffin contracts, and if the layer is very thin it will crack and leave a portion of the jelly exposed.

When you want a baked pie shell, invert the pie pan, grease the bottom (which of course must be very clean), and put the crust over that and bake. In this way you will have no trouble in having perfect shells, without blisters. Prick the dough lightly with a fork before putting in the oven.

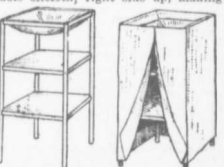
A Homemade Cooler

WHEN ICE CANNOT BE HAD.

We are so situated that we cannot get any ice for the summer, so I have contrived a little homemade affair which does duty as an ice box and keeps the butter, milk, etc., in tolerably good condition. It was made this way:

I took four broom handles each 3 ft. 6 in. long, but, of course, any other sticks of wood would do, and the shape, length and thickness need not be the same. I jointed the four broom handles together at the tops with four 18-inch sticks of 1-inch square thickness, and below these put two 18-inch square shelves (taken from a grocery box), at convenient distances apart.

At this stage the ice-box-to-be looks like a little square table with bottom shelves, but no top. I supply this top by tacking on a 22-inch square of table oilcloth, right side up, making



HOMEMADE COOLER

the few necessary pleats, so that oilcloth top will sag, bag-like. This is intended to hold water.

Next I tack on a clean gunnysack curtain all around this ice-box table, allowing the hem to reach almost to the floor, and having the top lap over a little more than the bottom. Let it will soak up the water. The curtain should be put on perfectly plain, with an opening in the front, lapping about 3 inches.

Now place this little "refrigerator" in a shady and drafty place, keep the top of oilcloth filled with water, and the gunnysack curtain will gradually absorb this, and the breezes playing around the wet curtain will keep the things on the shelves nice and cool. Being wet and dark and cool, flies will not bother this "refrigerator," which cost practically nothing, since the necessary material can be found on almost any farm.—Mrs. Samuel Brown, York Co., Ont.

There is nothing else which sweetens utensils in which milk has been kept, so well as a solution of strong baking soda, and hot water, in the proportion of a level teaspoonful to a quart of warm water. Let the solution stand in the utensils long enough to get cold. Pudding dishes, and pots and pans that have been burned with their contents are easily cleaned in this way.

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