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BERRIES other than strawberries

Blackberries, raspberries, and dewberries are similar in general structure. They differ from one another in shape or color, but quality factors are about the same for all. Look for a bright clean appearance and a uniform good color for the species. The individual small cells making up the berry should be plump and tender but not mushy. Look for berries that are fully ripe with no attached stem caps.

Avoid leaky and moldy berries. You can usually spot them through the openings in containers or by wet or stained spots on wood or fiber containers.

Sort berries and remove leaves, stems and overripe berries. Wash and drain.

Sugar helps canned and frozen berries have better flavor and texture but can be omitted from a safety standpoint. Frozen fruits packed in a sirup are generally best for dessert use; those packed in dry sugar or unsweetened are best for most cooking purposes.

For canning, use a thin, medium, or heavy sirup to suit the sweetness of the fruit and family preference. To make a thin sirup (30-percent), combine 2 cups sugar and 4 cups water or juice. Bring to a boil. Increase sugar to 3 cups for a medium sirup (40-percent) and to 4 3/4 cups sugar for a heavy sirup (50-percent).

FREEZING BERRIES

Sirup pack. Pack berries into containers and cover with cold 40- or 50-percent sirup. Leave 1/2 to 1 1/2-inches headspace--the smaller amount for wide topped pint containers; the larger amount for narrow topped quart containers. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

Sugar pack. To 1 quart berries, add 3/4 cup sugar. Turn berries in sugar gently until most of the sugar is dissolved. Fill containers leaving headspace as in sirup pack. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

Unsweetened pack. Pack berries into containers, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

CANNING BERRIES

Fill jars to 1/2 inch of top. For a full pack, shake berries down while filling jars. Cover with boiling sirup, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles by running spatula or knife between jar and food. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water bath canner (212° F.).

Pint jars 10 minutes

Quart jars 15 minutes

MF-132 Canning and Freezing - General Information has directions for processing in a boiling water bath canner.

JELLIES

Fruit, pectin, acid, and sugar are needed to make a jellied product. Blackberries have enough natural pectin and acid to make high quality jellied products. Like other fruits they have less pectin and acid when fully ripe

than before ripening. For jellies to be made without added pectin, use 1/4 underripe berries. Many homemakers prefer adding pectin because fully ripe fruit can be used, cooking time is shorter and is standardized, and theyield from a given amount of fruit is greater.

Sugar is needed to form a gel, to preserve the product, and for flavor. Beet and cane sugars can be used with equal success. Corn sirup or honey can be used in place of part of the sugar. Artificial sweeteners cannot be used.

Light corn sirup can replace up to 1/4 of the sugar in jellies made without added pectin. With powdered pectin, corn sirup can replace up to 1/2 of the sugar.

Honey can replace up to 1/2 of the sugar in recipes without added pectin. In products with added pectin, 2 cups of honey can replace 2 cups of sugar except in small recipes yielding less than 3 pints.

BLACKBERRY JELLY without added pectin Yield: 5 6-ounce glasses

4 cups blackberry juice (about 2 1/2 quarts fresh berries)
3 cups sugar

Crush berries, add 3/4 cup water, cover and bring to boil on high heat. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Put the cooked fruit in a damp jelly bag to extract juice. The clearest jelly comes from juice that drips through without pressure.

Measure juice into a large kettle. Add sugar and stir well. Boil over high heat to 221° F., or 9° F. above the boiling point of water in area. Or use the spoon or sheet test to judge doneness. Dip a cool metal spoon in the boiling jelly mixture.

Remove from heat; skim off foam quickly. Pour hot jelly into hot sterile jars leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims clean, place metal lids on jars, screw metal bands down firmly, and stand jars upright to cool.

To seal with paraffin, pour hot paraffin onto hot jelly. Use a single thin layer of paraffin - about 1/8 inch. Prick air bubbles in paraffin. A double boiler is recommended for melting paraffin.

BLACKBERRY JELLY with powdered pectin Yield: 7 or 8 6-ounce glasses

3 1/2 cups blackberry juice (about 3 quarts fresh berries)
1 package powdered pectin
4 1/2 cups sugar

Extract juice and measure into kettle. Add the pectin and stir well. Place on high heat and, stirring constantly, bring to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down. Add the sugar, continue stirring, and heat again to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute.

Remove from heat and skim. Pour into hot sterile jars. Seal with lids or paraffin.

Information adapted from USDA Home and Garden Bulletins by Jo Anne Barton, Extension Specialist, Foods and Nutrition.

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