



If you always wanted to taste corn cob or red beet jellies, then John Dochter and his wife, Betty, are the people to see. The Dochters market unusual flavors under the name Unique Jelly and sell them at craft shows, tourist spots, and by mail.

## Unique Jelly Keeps This Fellow Busy

### LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff  
**BROWNSTOWN** (Lancaster Co.) — John Dochter made 3,000 jars of jelly last year. If you ask him for strawberry jelly, he wrinkles his nose and retorts, "Strawberry — anybody can make that. I like to make unique jellies."

So John makes jellies in flavors such as corn cob, red beet, dandelion, alfalfa, sweet potato butter, pumpkin butter, and apple raisin chutney.

Most of the pleasure that John derives from jelly making is watching others taste the jellies.

He and his wife take the jellies to craft shows and market them under the name Unique Jelly. Passersbys may sample the jellies on crackers.

Of course, some turn up their noses at the mere thought of tasting corn cob jelly, but others are curious and stop to sample the flavors. About 25 percent of the passersby are thrilled with the unique jelly flavors. It's these people who purchase the gift-size jars for friends, neighbors, and themselves.

John, who is 65 years old, started his jelly business about six years ago. Before that, he barbecued pigs and chicken for festivals and other large gatherings. At some festivals, he roasted four pigs at a time and served 3,000 pork sandwiches a day at places like the Bavarian Festival in Barnesville.

But all that heavy lifting took its toll and when John had heart bypass surgery, he had to give up his barbecue business. Because he doesn't ever plan to retire and because he had made many friends at shows and festivals while barbecuing, John thought of a way to stay active without heavy lifting.

Jelly making does require the long hours and heavy work that roasting pigs require, he said.

His Unique Jelly can be made in his home kitchen, packed in his van and transported to the many shows around the state.

The only drawback is that John's restricted diet doesn't allow jelly. That doesn't mean that John doesn't cheat occasionally especially when he is experimenting with a new flavor.

On a sunny spring day, John can often be found in a field of dandelions at such spots as a cloverleaf

where he picks about 200 pounds of dandelion. During the fall, he wants his corn cobs fresh, so he follows the corn picker to pick up 400 to 500 pounds of discarded corn cobs.

"The nice thing about my job is that I can freeze the corn cobs and dandelion until I'm ready to make the jelly," John said.

In his years of cooking jelly, John has developed many secrets that he isn't about to share. He knows what to do to keep dandelions from developing a bitter flavor during cooking.

For red beet jelly, John has one particular brand of canned red beets that he buys to make his jelly. Other brands give it an entirely different texture and flavor he said.

Where does John get his ideas for new flavors? "I think about it a lot," he answers. "For instance, I always thought alfalfa tea tastes pretty good so I thought why can't I make alfalfa jelly."

He did. And now alfalfa is his favorite jelly.

He said that dandelion jelly is the most popular with urban people while corn cob seems to be the choice of rural people.

Sometimes people suggest ideas for jellies. Although John is willing to try any flavor, he said he

needs to take into consideration the availability of the supply. Someone suggested violet jelly, but John doesn't think he would be able to gather the amount of violets required.

Apple raisin chutney is often used as a flavor enhancer for meats and is excellent on bagels, English muffins, turkey and ham.

Next year, John plans to add a few no-sugar jellies. According to John, no-sugar jellies are difficult because they must pass a lot of government restrictions. Jelly must be 51 percent natural or added sugar; otherwise it must be called a spread. Butters must be 43 percent solids.

A commercial printer designed labels and brochures that John uses in promoting Unique Jelly.

"My dreams are unlimited. The business depends on how far I'm willing to take it," John said.

He ships his jellies all over the U.S. The jelly is packed in 8-ounce jars or in three-jar gift packages. He even offers a Jelly of the Month Club, where members receive an unusual jelly every month. Price: 1 jar for \$2.50; three jars for \$7.50 plus shipping and handling charges. Send orders to John Dochter, Box 191, Brownstown, PA 17508.

## Retirement Workshop Offered

**CREAMERY** (Montgomery Co.) — If you are retired, are about to retire, or are just beginning to consider what retirement might be like farther down the road, a two-part workshop called "Retirement: A New Life, A Different Life" can help you to make retirement a positive and productive time.

The workshop, developed by Penn State Extension Faculty Barbara Davis and Marilyn Furry, offers advice on finances and addresses other concerns about retiring, such as planning effectively, taking care of your health, finding the best place to live, maintaining relationships and staying actively involved in life.

In addition to discussion and activities, the workshop includes a video in which people who are actively planning their retirement share their thoughts and concerns as well as their plans for the future. Others, who are already retired, talk about their new

experiences.

If you are interested in participating in "Retirement: A New Life, A Different Life, workshops are being held on January 8 and 15, free of charge. For more information contact Nancy Stevens at the Montgomery County office of Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Add to the Christmas spirit with a "ready-when-you-are" dessert. Roll scoops of chocolate ice cream in crushed peppermint candies or roll eggnog ice cream in crushed peanut brittle. Store scoops in freezer and serve as needed.



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