

Well Preserved

The Well Preserved news column is prepared by Lancaster County Cooperative Extension. It includes food preservation information and questions.

Blueberries

Blueberries are beginning to appear in the market and food preservers will soon be thinking of ways to capture the colorful sweetness of this little berry for later use. This is one of the easier fruits to freeze, but may also be canned, made into jam, jelly, preserves, or syrups. Even pies, cakes and muffins made with blueberries can be frozen.

Wild blueberries have been a cherished part of our heritage since the nation's earliest years. As one of a few native fruits, early settlers cherished the tiny berries as a basic ingredient in food and medicines. They incorporated blueberries into their diets by eating them fresh, adding them to stews and soups, and many other foods.

It wasn't until the 1930's that the cultivated blueberry business began to come alive. Today, North American blueberries account for 95 percent of the world's harvest.

Pennsylvania blueberries are most abundant during the month of July although some varieties mature later. Popular varieties include Earliblue, Bluetta, Blue-ray, Bluecrop, Berkeley, and Latblue. All these varieties are excellent for eating fresh or for freezing and cooking.



When shopping, choose berries that appear plump and firm with a light silvery bloom. Select fully ripe fruit since unripe berries do not become sweeter after they are picked. Ripe blueberries have a light blue to blue-black color. Red or green berries have a sour flavor. Keep in mind that the bigger the berry, the sweeter it will be. Of course, for some palates, that doesn't mean the flavor is necessarily better. Part of the appeal of any berry is its tartness.

Blueberries are delicate. When you get them home, examine berries carefully and remove squashed, diseased or moldy berries. Refrain from washing blueberries until you are ready to use them; otherwise they will spoil quickly if they are refrigerated. Freezing washed berries results in a tougher skinned product. The National Center of Home Food Preservation recommends that blueberries be frozen without washing and then be washed before being used. This may result in them becoming mushy.

Another option is to wash

them before freezing and laying them out on a towel to dry thoroughly before freezing. If you want to freeze them for later use spread dry (washed or unwashed) berries on a flat tray and place in the freezer. Once hard, transfer to any closed container. Do not thaw when you are ready to use them. Blueberries may also be frozen crushed or pureed. Crush or press washed berries through a fine sieve, or puree in a blender or food processor. Mix 1 to 1 1/2 cups of sugar with each quart (2 pounds) of crushed berries or puree. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Pack into containers, leaving head space.

Blueberries may be canned using a light or medium sugar syrup or may be covered with water, apple or white grape juice.

To make a light syrup for a canner load of quarts, mix 2 1/4 cups sugar in 9 cups water and heat to dissolve or mix and dissolve 3 1/4 cups sugar in 8 1/4 cups water to make a medium syrup.

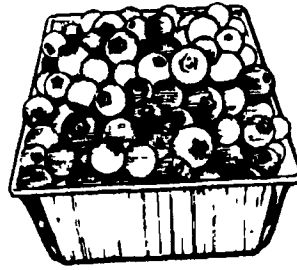
To hot pack, place drained berries in boiling syrup, juice, or water and boil 30 seconds. Fill clean jars with hot berries and cooking liquid, leaving 1/2 inch headspace.

To raw pack, place drained berries in jars and cover with your choice of boiling water, juice, or syrup, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. With either method, process jars in a boiling water canner. Fill canner halfway with water and preheat to 180 degrees F for hot packs or 140 degrees F for raw packs. Load sealed jars into canner rack. Add water, if needed, to a level of one inch above jars. Cover.

When water boils vigorously,

lower heat to maintain a gentle boil and process 15 minutes for hot packed pints or quarts and raw packed pints. Raw packed quarts should be processed 20 minutes. Altitudes above 1000 feet require additional processing time.

Here's a recipe that's sure to become a favorite on pancakes, waffles, or on top of ice cream. Make some for yourself and make some more to give as gifts.



BLUEBERRY SYRUP

2 quarts blueberries
6 cups water, divided
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
3 cups sugar
2 tablespoons lemon juice
Crush blueberries. Combine blueberries, 2 cups water and lemon peel in a medium saucepot. Simmer 5 minutes. Strain through a damp jelly bag or several layers of cheesecloth. Combine sugar and 4 cups water in a medium saucepot; boil to 260 degrees F (adjust for altitude).

Add blueberry juice to sugar syrup. Boil 1 minute. Stir in lemon juice. Ladle hot syrup into hot jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Adjust two-piece caps. Process 10 minutes in a boiling water canner. Yield: about 3 pints. Source: Ball Blue Book

If you have food preservation questions, a home economist is available to answer questions on Wednesdays 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., call (717) 394-6851 or write Penn State Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County, 1383 Arcadia Rd., Rm.1, Lancaster, PA, 17601.

The Microwaveable Egg

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) —

With eggs on hand, you can serve a great meal in minutes. If you cook those eggs in a microwave oven, you can save even more time. Any day of the week, any meal of the day, eggs help take the panic out of meal preparation so you can enjoy your food along with your family and friends.

So grab a carton of eggs and get cracking for simple-to-make, easy-to-afford, nutritious, fast food. But there are special tips for cooking eggs in the microwave. To learn the do's and don'ts of the microwaveable egg, request the recipe fact sheet The Microwaveable Egg. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Consumer Connection, Berks County Cooperative Extension, P.O. Box 520, Leesport, PA 19533.

Hurry-Up Breakfast

Cooking Spray
1 slice cooked lean ham or turkey ham
1 egg
Salt and pepper, optional
1 tablespoon shredded reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
1/2 English muffin, toasted or 1 slice bread, toasted

Evenly coat a six-ounce custard cup with cooking spray. Press ham into cup to form a nest. Break egg into cup. Gently prick yolk with tip of knife or wooden pick. Season with salt and pepper to taste, if desired. Top with cheese. Cover tightly with plastic wrap. Cook on full power 40 to 60 seconds (600 to 700 watts: 1 to 1 1/2 minutes). Let stand, covered, until white is completely set and yolk is beginning to thicken but is not hard, about 1 to 3 minutes. Slide onto muffin half.

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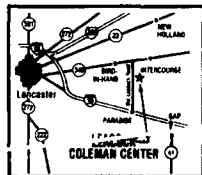
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July 12: 8am to ???		July 13: 8am to 3pm	
8am	Acquaintance Time	8am	Acquaintance Time
Noon	Parade of Tractors	9am	More Tractor Races
1pm	Slow Races, Teeter-Totter, Egg Carrying & More	Noon	Parade and Awards
3pm	Weigh-In for Tractor Pull	1pm	Pedal Tractor Pull for Kids
4pm	Tractor Pull Competition	1pm	On Stage: Holt Twins & Family w/ Antique Musical Instruments
Admission: \$3 (Under-12: FREE!)		1pm	Schaeffer Farmhouse Tours
		2pm	Storytelling: Lewis Everline

It's all at the 90-acre Alexander Schaeffer Farm on Rt-501 just south of Schaefferstown. For Tractor Show details, please call (717) 866-2618, (717) 866-2055 or (717) 949-2444.

Historic Schaefferstown, Inc.

Proceeds benefit HSI a nonprofit educational organization For membership details contributions & volunteer opportunities call (717) 949-2244

I've gone from 246 lbs to 193 lbs. on the Fastrim™ Weight Loss Plan. I lost 25 lbs in the first 6 weeks and a total of 53 lbs so far. I used to wear size 46 pants and now wear 36 comfortably!
— Jess "Dad" Dye, ID

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