

'Berry' Delicious Jams, Jellies From Anna Martin's Kitchen

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DENVER (Lancaster Co.) — You've seen her name. "Anna Martin" appears in print as a frequent contributor to "Cook's Question Corner."

Anna's culinary skills and her recipes are basic ones that she, her husband Gene, and three adult children, their spouses, and five grandchildren endorse.

One of the family's favorites is raspberry jam and jelly, which Anna has been busy preserving the past two weeks.

Raspberries, also called bramble berries, have a short growing season. Although delightful eaten fresh, raspberry goodness can be retained to savor the berry's flavor throughout the year.

Preserving the berries is not for the cook who doesn't like to get her hands dirty. Raspberries stain hands and anything else they touch. But the time and effort is wellworth it for all who taste Anna's flavorful jelly and jams — store-brought varieties are no comparison.

To prepare for jelly making, the raspberries need to be squeezed through cheesecloth to remove the seeds for jam, the berries are lightly mashed.

"Some people don't like the seeds and others don't mind them," Anna said of the process.

"I keep record of what my friends and family prefer and give these as Christmas gifts," Anna said of the attractive and neatly labeled raspberry jelly and jam jars sitting on her kitchen countertop.

Although the Martins have a few raspberry bushes growing on their wooded property, Anna picks the bulk of berries along roadsides and remote wooded areas.

"The birds get them about as fast as they come," Anna said of the berries on their own property. That may be because the birds already view the Martins' yard as "bird paradise" because of the many bird feeders they have erected.

Because the Martins live in a remote area, bramble berries are plentiful along roadsides. Anna takes long walks in search of the berries.

When selecting berries, choose those that are firm, plump, and solid in color. A solid-deep color is a good indicator of ripeness. Immature berries do not sweeten after they are picked.

Raspberries are very delicate and should be used immediately after harvested or refrigerated. Black raspberries maintain their freshness for three to five days after harvesting if kept refrigerated, but red raspberries last only two to three days. Do not wash berries before refrigerating.

When ready to use, wash berries gently and quickly in cold water. Gently lift them from the water and drain. Never soak berries in water or they will lose sugar, flavor, and color.

Avoid using aluminum, tin, or iron utensils or baking pans because berries can turn from red to blue in color.

Because Anna works part time as a para-educator for IU 13 Special Ed classes, her time preserving summer's bounty is limited.

Anna's husband Eugene owns Martin's Sawing Service, a portable Wood Mizer band saw that he takes to the customers' sites to cut wood according to their specification.

Here are the recipes that Anna uses. Although different brand names can be used to make jelly, Anna cautions that each variety has a bit different measurements and often is not interchangeable. Anna uses Ball Fruit Jell Pectin.

For her own use, Anna makes sugarless or less sugar by using the pectin label for sugarless varieties — these directions must be followed carefully because the directions are not interchangeable for sugar and non-sugar varieties.

BLACK RASPBERRY JELLY
 4 cups prepared juice
 ¼ cup lemon juice
 5½ cups sugar
 1 pouch Ball Fruit Jell Pectin

Prepare juice by crushing one layer of berries at a time with a potato masher or similar method. Simmer berries 5 minutes in covered saucepan. Pour into cheesecloth and allow juice to drip several hours. Squeezing may cause cloudiness; however, Anna does squeeze remaining juice from berries.

Wash jars and lids.
 Measure juice in saucepan.



Anna Martin takes advantage of summer's bounty by harvesting berries to prepare raspberry jam and jelly for holiday gifts.

Add lemon juice. Stir fruit jell pectin into prepared fruit or juice. Bring mixture to full boil over high heat, stirring constantly. Add sugar. Return to full rolling boil for one minute. Continue stirring. Remove from heat. Skim foam off if necessary. Ladle hot jelly into hot jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace.

Wipe rim and threads of each jar with clean, damp cloth. Center heated lid on jar. Screw band firmly and evenly on jar until finger-tip tight.

As each jar is filled and capped, place in boiling water bath in canner. Cover each jar with 1-2 inches of water. Place lid on canner and bring water to a gentle, steady boil. Process jelly 5 minutes.

After processing, remove jars and set upright on towel to cool 12-24 hours. Do not retighten bands. When jars are cool, test each one for a seal by pressing center of lid. The lid should flex up and down. (If it does not, im-

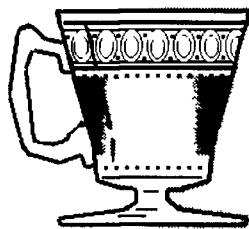
mediately refrigerate or reprocess with new lid for full length of time). Remove bands, wipe sealed jars with clean, damp cloth. Store in cool dry place up to one year.

BLACK RASPBERRY JAM
 5 cups crushed berries
 7 cups sugar
 1 pouch fruit jell pectin
 Wash and prepare fruit. Crush

berries. (For jam, do not use cheesecloth). Bring mixture to full boil. Stir pectin into prepared fruit. Bring to a full boil over high heat, stirring constantly. Add sugar. Return to full rolling boil one minute. Continue stirring. Remove from heat. Pour into jars. Process in boiling water bath for 10 minutes.



Turning berries into juice can be a bit messy but definitely rewarding for the rich, flavorful jams and jellies they produce.



New Research For Bramble Growers

PIKETON, Ohio — Black raspberries typically are not harvested until several years after the brambles are planted, said Shawn Wright, an Ohio State University Extension horticulture specialist. But experimenters at the research center harvested black raspberries early in hopes of benefiting local berry growers.

"Growers may be able to re-coop from some of their investments quicker by not waiting until the third year," Wright

said. "It's not done commonly, but with increasing costs of production, anything will help."

Brambles usually are planted the first year, pruned the second and allowed to produce berries the third. Growers do not get a full crop the second year because the brambles are establishing their crown and root systems, Wright said. The "baby crop" would aid in getting income to the grower a year early.

"Some growers think that it's not worth the risk to the plant, but if you need cash for your operation, this may be a way to do so," Wright said. The experimental brambles will be monitored to see if the earlier berries affect the traditional eight-year production cycle.

Ohio State University Extension is conducting research. For more information, contact Shawn Wright at wright.705@osu.edu or 740-289-2071.



Expect to be scratched by briars when picking berries in the wild.