

Family Living Focus
by
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The blackberry patches were full of pickers. Protected with our jeans and long-sleeved shirts, we walked to back on the hill to find the juiciest blackberries. Dad made each of us buckets by attaching a wire handle to a coffee can. He would tie his bucket to his belt so he could pick with both hands. In no time his bucket was full. Mom, on the other hand, picked slower, but she "looked over" each berry before she put it in the bucket so there are no stray leaves, bugs, or damaged berries in the lot. My bucket filled slower, because I did a lot of sampling.

Even as kids we helped make the jams and jellies. Mom recycled small glass jars from mustard, olives, maraschino cherries, and cheese spreads to use for jelly and jam. I don't think pint mason jars were available in those days, at least I never recall seeing any. We filled all the jars and covered the top with paraffin wax. Mom had a small iron skillet she used to melt the paraffin. I liked to open the jars of jam by pushing on one side of the wax seal and watch it pop off. We washed the wax disk and put it back in the little skillet to use next year. Sometimes we would

find some mold under the wax seal, and then the jam was thrown away.

Jam-making techniques have come a long way since my days living at home. The recycled mustard and olive jars have been replaced by 4 ounces and half-pint mason jars. Instead of the paraffin seal, we use two-piece canning lids and process all jams and jellies in a boiling water bath.

Today we also know that mold growth may not be as harmless as it was believed in the past. USDA and Cooperative Extension endorse processing all jams and jellies and soft spreads in a boiling water bath to keep the potential for mold spoilage as small as possible. Some molds growing on fruit products made at home have been shown to produce "mycotoxins" or mold poisons. The danger to humans from consuming mycotoxins, from moldy jars of jams is not clear, although one mycotoxin, patulin, has been shown to be carcinogenic in animals.

Paraffin or wax sealing of jars is no longer considered an acceptable choice for any sweet spread. Any pinholes, shrinkage or cracks in the wax paraffin

allow airborne molds to contaminate and grow on the product. In addition, leaks or holes in the paraffin can allow product to seep out during storage and once on the surface, it will provide nutrients for molds to grow on the surface and enter into the jam or jelly in the jar.

In order to get the highest quality, least health and safety risks and the lowest chance of losing product, use standard canning jars, with self-sealing flat metal lids and screw bands, fill hot jars with hot product and process in a boiling water bath at least 5 minutes.

Today Mom makes many more frozen jams. We especially like the frozen cherry made from sour cherries we picked last summer. These jams are sweeter than the cooked jams but have more of the fresh fruit flavors.

Although the techniques of food preservation have changed since I was growing up in Montrose, the family traditions of making jams and jellies have remained the same. My children and I have been making jam and jellies for our family and friends since they were small. It is something we do together and that makes it special.

Jams, Jelly, Family Traditions

I spent last weekend visiting with my family. My parents and my sister, Sue and her family, live in the northeastern part of Pennsylvania in my hometown, Montrose. As usual there were more things to do and talk about than time allows, but we get in as much as possible before I had to leave for the three-hour trip home to Lancaster. We shopped, hiked, talked, and ate.

Dad commented that nearly all the food for dinner came out of their freezer or was home canned by Mom. The only thing not home preserved was fresh asparagus from the garden. As long as I can remember, we have had a

garden and my parents either canned or froze any garden excess for the winter. Of course, our favorites included the jams and jellies we made. Over the weekend we were comparing notes about which ones were the best and how jelly making has changed.

We always had strawberry and raspberry jam made from berries in the garden and blackberries from the woods. We also made currant-raspberry jelly since we had a red currant bush (a piece off Grandma Hallstead's currant bush from the farm). This tangy jelly is still one of my favorites. And, the currants are easy to pick.

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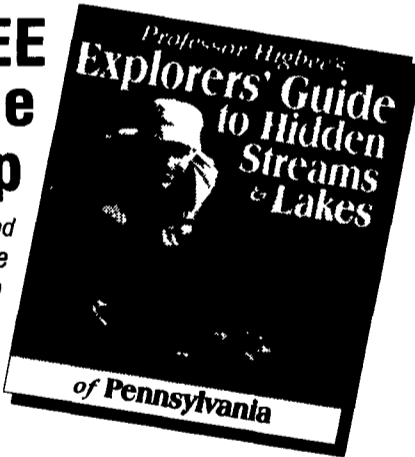
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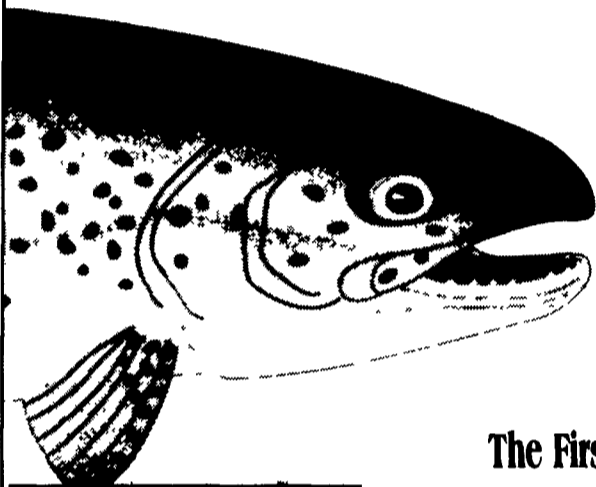
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LOST STREAM MAP

The STREAM MAP OF OHIO resembles another map--known to Pennsylvania anglers as the "Lost Stream Map."

The "Stream Map of Pennsylvania" was completed in 1965 after a 30 year effort by Howard Higbee, a former Penn State Professor

Professor Higbee succeeded in creating a map of the highest detail possible... a map that shows every stream and lake He painstakingly plotted by hand, the location of 45,000 miles of streams onto a 3 by 5 foot map

The map sold extremely well - until it was lost several years later. Incredibly, the printer entrusted with the original drawing and printing plates declared bankruptcy, then carelessly hauled Higbee's 30 years of work to the landfill.

The few remaining dog-eared copies became a prized fisherman's possession. Professor Higbee was offered \$400 for one of his last maps. And state agencies were forced to keep their copies under lock and key.

The experts had always told Professor Higbee that reprints were impossible, because the maps were printed in non-photographic blue.

Then, in 1991, at the age of 91, Howard Higbee's dream came true. Computers made it possible to reprint the map. Holding an updated map, Howard said, "I never thought I'd live to see this day."

Then, by combining Professor Higbee's knowledge with computer technology -- the STREAM MAP OF OHIO was created.

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