

May 10, 2017



Berries In May

by Summer Brasuel

UCCE Master Food Preserver of El Dorado County

How lucky we are to have such a variety of berries grown locally right here in El Dorado County; strawberries, raspberries (red, golden, black), blueberries, and a wide variety of blackberries. We can preserve these delicious berries in a variety of ways.

Freezing berries is the easiest and allows us to use them in many different ways at a time convenient to us. Preserve berries as soon as possible after harvest and at their peak of ripeness.

Do not soak berries in water. To clean, place the berries in a colander, dip into cool water, and gently swish, drain. Pat dry with paper towels.

Freeze berries with sugar, in a sugar water syrup, or unsweetened. Unsweetened berries lose quality faster than those packed in sugar or sugar syrups.

Tip: if you freeze using sugar, measure out the sugar and write the amount used on the label.

This way you can reduce the amount of sugar required in a recipe using the frozen berries. For example, if you plan to make blackberry jam using your frozen berries, then measure the amount of berries used in the jam recipe, typically 6 cups of crushed berries, add ½ cup of sugar, package them for freezing, and label the package "6 cups crushed blackberries and ½ cup sugar". Later, when you make the jam, subtract the ½ cup of sugar from the amount called for in the recipe.

Speaking of blackberry jam, here is another tip. Blackberries have a lot of seeds, especially our native wild blackberries. For a better product, remove the seeds from half of the berries used in a batch of jam. Be sure to re-measure the fruit after removing the seeds. You may have to add more crushed berries to get the correct amount used in the recipe.

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Other ways to preserve our bounty of berries is to dehydrate them. Whole, halved or as fruit leather.

There are a multitude of home canned berry products such as jams, butters, conserves, syrups, berry flavored vinegar, and shrubs. Be sure to use tested recipes from cooperative extension resources, National Center For Home Food Preservation, <http://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html>, and Ball, <https://www.freshpreserving.com/>.

On May 20, 2017, UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County are having a class, Berries In May, at the Bethell-Delfino Agriculture Building, 311 Fair Lane, Placerville, CA. Berry season is upon us, and with this year's rain we are sure to have a bountiful harvest. Jams and jellies do not require special equipment but they sure pack a wallop with scones, biscuits and toast. BarBQue sauces with berries are trickier but add a burst of flavor to pork and fish items. They make great gifts as well. Join us as we explore the juicy, tasty world of berries - and sample some new and different ways to incorporate them into your cooking.

The deadline for entry forms for your products into the El Dorado County Fair is May 24, 2017. Receiving Day is June 7, and Judging Day (open to the public) is June 10. Here is a link to the entry guide. Be sure to note all important dates and read the rules. There are more than a dozen special contest with \$25 prizes. Have some family fun!
<http://eldoradocountyfair.org/pdfs/FOODITEMS2017.pdf>

UCCE Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506 or email us at edmfp@ucanr.edu. For more information about our program and events, visit our website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmfp>. Sign up to receive our E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>. Find us on Facebook, too (UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County)!