

Dr Cath's Favourite Blackberry Recipes

Bramble jelly

Brambles or blackberries are low in pectin so lemon juice is essential in this recipe. To help the jelly set you can include some unripe red blackberries or a few crab apples if you wish. This dark purple jelly is wonderful as a filling for sponge cakes or as an accompaniment to roast lamb.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) blackberries

150 ml (5 fl oz) water

Granulated or caster sugar

Lemon juice

1 Put the blackberries (there's no need to top and tail them) into a large heavy-based pan with the water. Place over a low heat and slowly bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer gently for about 40-60 minutes, until the fruit is very soft.

2 Ladle the fruit and juices into a scalded jelly bag. Strain through the jelly bag overnight.

3 Measure the juice into a large heavy-based pan and to every 600 ml (1 pt) juice, allow 450 g (1 lb) sugar and 2 tablespoons of lemon juice.

4 Heat the juice, sugar and lemon juice, and stir over a low heat until the sugar has dissolved completely. Bring to the boil and boil rapidly for about 10 minutes, until setting point is reached.

5 Remove the pan from the heat. Pour into warmed sterilised jars, then cover, seal and label.

Blackberry butter

Wild blackberries are at their best when plump, ripe and full of inky juice. Cultivated blackberries lack the deep flavour of wild berries. They make a beautiful amethyst-coloured spread that is delicious with scones and cream or as a filling for a plain sponge cake.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) blackberries

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) cooking apples coarsely chopped including cores and peel

Grated zest and juice of 2 lemons

350 g (12 1/2 oz) caster sugar to every 450g (1lb) fruit pulp

1 Put the blackberries and apples (including cores and peel) into a large heavy-based pan with the lemon zest and juice. And slowly bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer gently for about 15 minutes until very soft.

2 Remove the pan from the heat. Push through a sieve and weigh the pulp. Stir in the required amount of sugar and heat gently until the sugar has dissolved completely.

3 Bring to the boil and cook steadily for about 20 minutes until the mixture is thick and creamy, stirring all the time. The actual cooking time will depend on the ripeness of the fruit.

4 Remove the pan from the heat. Pour into warmed sterilised jars and cover with plastic or metal tops. Label and store in a cool place, and use within a month.

Spiced pickled blackberries

300 ml (11 fl.oz) red wine vinegar

450g (1 lb) white or brown sugar

½ tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp ground ginger

½ tsp ground cloves

1.5kg (3lb 5oz) blackberries

1 Put the vinegar, sugar and spices into a large heavy-based pan and heat gently until the sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer gently for a few minutes.

2 Add the blackberries and simmer for about 4-6 minutes, until the blackberries are soft but still whole. Remove the berries with a slotted spoon and pack into warmed sterilised jars.

3 Boil the vinegar and sugar rapidly for about 5 minutes, or until the mixture forms a thick syrup. Remove from the heat, then pour the hot syrup into the jars of fruit to cover completely.

4 Cover and seal tightly. Leave for at least three weeks before using.

Blackberry Chutney

1kg (2lb) cooking apples

1kg (2lb) onions, chopped

1kg (2lb) soft brown sugar

1.25 litres (2 pints) vinegar

25g (1oz) salt

50g (2oz) mustard powder or mustard seed

50g (2oz) ground ginger

10ml (2 teaspoons) ground mace

5ml (1 teaspoon) cayenne pepper

Yield: c. 4kg (8lb)

1. Wash the blackberries & put in a preserving pan.
2. Peel & core the apples & chop them. Add to the blackberries with the onions, sugar, vinegar, seasoning & spices.
3. Simmer for around 1 hour 15 minutes until thick, stirring well. A spoon should leave a furrow through the goop for a few seconds if it's thick enough.
4. Pot into hot jars, cover and seal.