

homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "BERRIES." Information from the plant breeders and home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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It makes my mouth water just to think of what I'm going to talk about today-- blueberries--and blackberries--and raspberries. For when I think about those berries I immediately think of such delicacies as blackberry jam--and blueberry pie--and raspberry ice cream.

Today I have some information about these berries--information straight from the plant scientists and the home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

First of all, here's an item from Dr. George M. Darrow, a plant scientist at the Department of Agriculture. Doctor Darrow is the man who heads up all the berry breeding work that the Department of Agriculture and cooperating state agencies are carrying out. He says,

"Although blackberries--and blueberries--and raspberries--haven't yet been improved to the extent that the strawberry has, there are plenty of young hopefuls among the new varieties of these berries.

"Take blueberries, for example. The Department of Agriculture has been working for better blueberries since about 1906. From this research and from research of the cooperating State experiment stations have come 11 of the 12 named varieties that are cultivated today. Among other things, some of the cultivated blueberries are as much as three times the size of the wild ones.

"The blueberry is definitely a berry with a future. For today the blueberry crop is in the ten million dollar class-- and most of those that come to market are still gathered from wild patches. There's no telling what proportions the crop

will reach as more and more of the improved berries are planted."

And by the way, if you've ever been confused as to the difference between a huckleberry and a blueberry--here's the way Doctor Darrow explains it.

"If you cut a huckleberry through the center--you'll see that it has ten large seeds in it--set around the berry in a ring. Look closely at those seeds and you'll notice that each one looks something like a tiny peach pit. It has a bony seed that crackles between your teeth when you eat the huckleberry. On the other hand a blueberry has many more seeds. But usually they are so tiny and soft that you think the berries are seedless when you eat them."

As for blackberries--and raspberries--the Department of Agriculture has been working to improve them also. Just last year, it had a hand in introducing two new improved blackberry varieties--called the PACIFIC and CASCADE. The Pacific blackberry is especially suitable for canning and quick freezing.

Right now--raspberry improvement work is aimed at getting raspberries that are bigger--and better to eat. The plant scientists also want raspberry varieties that stand up under canning--and freezing--and long-distance shipment.

But so much for news about berry improvement. Here are some suggestions from the home economists of the Department of Agriculture--on the food value of these berries--and ways to put them up for next winter.

"From the consumer standpoint, the food value of these berries is just another reason for enjoying them. For, in addition to tasting good--every serving of blackberries, or blueberries, or raspberries--also adds small amounts of several of the vitamins."

When you bring berries home from the store or in from the patch--keep them in the refrigerator or some other cool place. Spread them out in a shallow tray or dish so they won't be mashed together. Then cover them with wax paper--but be sure not to wrap the paper too tightly around them. Wash berries just before you're ready to use them.

If you want to save some berry goodness for next winter--you might can them or make them up into jams and jellies. Blackberries and raspberries both make excellent jelly. For they have both the acid and the pectin that's necessary to make jelly "jell."

If you object to blackberry or raspberry seeds in jam--it's easy to take these seeds out first. Just boil the berries a few minutes--then put them through a fine sieve to take out the seeds before you weigh out the fruit and add the sugar.

A good way to put up berries for pie fillings is to precook the berries--that is to cook the berries and the sugar before you even pour the berries into the can to be processed. If you do that first, it will cut down the processing time a lot.

For every pound of raw berries, use about one-fourth to one-half pound of sugar. Whether you use more or less sugar will depend on the sweetness of the berries. Cook the berries and the sugar together. Stir them gently all the time--and let them boil for 3 to 4 minutes. Then pack them hot into the cans and process them in a boiling water bath.

If you do your canning in tin--remember to get the special R-enamel cans--the ones with the bright finish especially for berries and some of the red fruits.

If you're planning to can blackberries--or blueberries--or raspberries--I suggest that you write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for their canning handbook, if you don't have this bulletin already. The title is "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats." It is Farmers' Bulletin 1762--and single copies are free. You'll find it a helpful reference book the whole year round.

