

Preserving berries

ST. CLOUD (6/10/13) – We know summer has arrived when we bite into a juicy sweet strawberry or tasty ripe raspberry.

Food preservation season begins with preserving berries by freezing, canning, drying or as jams and jellies. The freezing of berries is a great place for a new food preserver to develop their preservation skills. Freezing saves time, nutrients, and can maintain the fresh taste and color of fruit.

Preserve fruits as soon as possible after harvest and at the peak of ripeness. To clean, place the berries in a colander, dip in cool water and gently swish and drain well. Do not soak berries in water.

Berries can be frozen with sugar, in a sugar water syrup, or unsweetened. Unsweetened fruits lose color, flavor, and texture faster than those packed in sugar or sugar syrups. Sugar substitutes, if used in freezing fruit, add a sweet flavor but are not as beneficial in preserving color and texture as sugar.

A convenient way to freeze berries is to tray pack. Simply spread a single layer of berries on a shallow tray and freeze. When frozen, promptly package, label, and return to the freezer. Blueberries freeze especially well with this method.

Most frozen fruits maintain high quality for 8 to 12 months when frozen in containers designated for freezing. Be sure to have an appliance thermometer in your freezer to assure a temperature of 0°F or below for best quality berries.

Whether you have your own strawberry patch, visit a “pick-your-own,” or stop by a farmers’ market, you have wonderful access to berries, and that is a “berry” good thing.

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