

Edible Wild Berries in Southeast Idaho



University of Idaho
Extension

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Sources: Complete Guide to Home Canning, Pacific North West, USDA Plant Data Base
And Edible Wild Berries of Northern Idaho.

Edible Wild Berries of Southeast Idaho:

The berry species in southeast Idaho include Western Chokecherry, Golden Currant, Blue Elderberry, River Hawthorn and other Hawthorns, Huckleberry (in a few high mountain locations), Creeping Mahonia (also called Creeping Oregon Grape), Serviceberry and Thimbleberry. In addition we have several species of Gooseberry with edible fruit.

Western Chokecherry

(Prunus Virginiana Demissa)



The Western Chokecherry is generally described as a perennial tree or shrub. Its most active growth period is in the spring and summer. The Western Chokecherry has green foliage and inconspicuous white flowers, with an abundance of conspicuous red fruits or seeds. The greatest bloom is usually observed in the spring, with fruit and seed production starting in June and continuing throughout the summer months. Leaves are not retained year to year. The Western Chokecherry has a short life span relative to most other plant species and a rapid growth rate. At maturity, the typical Western Chokecherry will reach a maximum height of 20 feet at 20 years of age.

Golden Currant

(Ribes Aureum Pursh)



There are many species of currants in southeast Idaho but only one species has fruit that actually tastes very good. The Golden Currant is so named because of its display of golden yellow flowers in early spring. It is very common along streams and in ravines and canyons and the seed is commonly spread by birds so it can pop up just about anywhere. The fruit can be golden – orange, red or black on the same species, in fact stands of Golden Currant are often found with all three colors of ripe berries next to each other. Golden Currant berries are by far the tastiest to eat fresh, far sweeter than most other currants. The Golden Currant has a long life span relative to most other plant species and a moderate growth rate. At maturity, the typical Golden Currant will reach a maximum height of 10 feet at 20 years of age.

Blue Elderberry

(Sambucus Nigra Cerulea)



The Blue Elderberry grows along the roadsides in the lower parts of mountains and canyons. It is a large shrub or small tree. Blossoms are borne in a large flat-topped umbel. When ripe, the berries are dark blue or purple, and hang from the branches in heavy clusters. The Elderberry is fast-growing and has sweet berries and is usually found in moist areas. The species elders have medium-green leaves and are small trees averaging 12 feet in height, but there are smaller ones around 6 feet in height and some as tall as 20 feet.

River Hawthorn

(*Crataegus Rivularis* Nutt.)



There are a few species of Hawthorn in southeast Idaho, but the fruit is so similar to Black Hawthorn that the uses are essentially the same. The River Hawthorn grows 10-18 feet tall. It occurs along stream banks and valley bottoms. Its stems are armed with stout thorns. The River Hawthorn has dense clusters of smelly white flowers in the spring. The fruit or seeds are blackish-purple and are ripe by late July. The bark is dirty grey in color, very rough and scaly to the touch. Young shoots are smooth and shiny. It is a very important food source for birds.

Black Mountain Huckleberry

(*Vaccinium Membranaceum*)



Huckleberries grow throughout the Pacific Northwest, Northeastern United States, even parts of Alaska. The shrubs grow well in middle to higher mountain elevations. Black Mountain Huckleberries range from 5 feet in height at lower elevations to 1 foot near timberlines. Small whitish flowers appear in May and June and turn to black berries in September. In the fall the leaves turn a beautiful red and purple color. Huckleberries for the market are nearly always gathered from the wild.

Creeping Mahonia

(*Mahonia Repens*)



Creeping Mahonia or Creeping Oregon Grape is very common in Southeast Idaho. Its fruits are so similar to tall Mahonia and Oregon grape that the uses are essentially the same. Creeping Mahonia is a sprawling evergreen with small, fragrant, yellow flowers in drooping racemes, followed by showy, purple fruit. The leathery, holly-like, compound leaves are a muted green, some turning mauve, rose, and rust-colored in winter. The plant grows less than 1 foot in height. This plant is attractive to bees, butterflies and/or birds.

Service Berry

(*Amelanchier Canadensis*)



Serviceberry is common in Southeast Idaho but we have two species here. The Saskatoon Serviceberry is typically found in somewhat moister locations including forested areas. It usually has the better tasting fruit. The Utah Serviceberry is most often found in open, drier areas, often with sagebrush present. The Serviceberry has dark green foliage and inconspicuous white flowers, with a moderate amount of conspicuous purple fruits or seeds. The greatest bloom is usually observed in the mid spring, with fruit and seed production starting in the spring and continuing until summer. Leaves are not retained year to year.

Thimble Berry

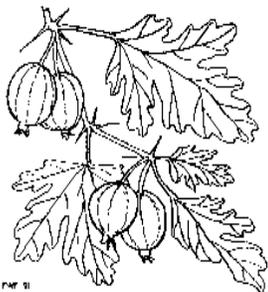
(*Rubus Parviflorus*)



The common name describes its appearance, as it does resemble a thimble from the top, where the thimble has little indentations to push down upon the needle. The Thimbleberry has small flowers that are white (sometimes lavender), slightly crinkled, and five-petaled; like a strawberry, the centre of the flower looks rather like a flattened, yellow form of the fruit to be produced. Imagine a raspberry but smaller, with smaller but more numerous fruitlets. It is red when ripe. Look for thimbleberries in the mountains, in places that are shady, moist, and cool. The leaf is fuzzy and five-lobed, and may grow larger than a person's spread hand.

Gooseberries

(*Ribes Hirtellum*)



Southeast Idaho has several species of Gooseberries that have edible fruit. The Gooseberry is very closely related to currants but usually have spines on the branches whereas currants rarely have any. The inconspicuous flowers, green with pink flushed petals, open in early spring. A gooseberry may be green, white (gray-green), yellow, shades of red, or pink to purple to almost black. Some are quite sweet while others are tart. Look for the edible Gooseberries along streams, in forested areas or on high elevation gravelly slopes. Gooseberries are deciduous shrubs, fast growing under optimum conditions to 3 feet tall and 6 feet wide.

Common Uses of Wild Berries

Freezing Wild Berries:

Freezing is one of the best ways to preserve the original color, flavor and nutritive value of berries. An average of one pound of fresh berries equals one pint of frozen berries.

- **Select berries with fresh sweet flavor, deep colors and firm textures and ideal maturity for eating fresh.** Freeze berries the same day as harvest.
- **Work quickly.** Sort berries and rinse in cold water using small quantities; and drain well. Do not soak. Discard any berries that are discolored or damaged.
- **Berries may be frozen with syrup, dry sugar or unsweetened.**
- **Always use freezer grade containers or bags for the best results.** When using rigid containers leave 1 inch headspace or fill pint or quart freezer bags 2-4 inches from the top and squeeze out air to allow for expansion during freezing. Label, date and freeze immediately.
- **When using a sugar substitute, follow product recommendations**

Syrup pack - mix 2½ cups of sugar in 4 cups of water. Add 1 cup of syrup to each quart of prepared fruit.

Dry sugar pack - add ½ cup of granulated sugar to each quart of prepared fruit and gently mix until sugar is dissolved.

Unsweetened loose pack - place on trays in a single layer. Freeze for 1 to 2 hours, then pack into containers and return to the freezer.

Thaw frozen berries in the refrigerator. For immediate use, thaw container in cold water. Use frozen berries within 12 to 18 months.

Drying Wild Berries:

Sort the berries and rinse them carefully in cool water. Select only the berries that are completely ripe, but not too soft. Discard any that have spots or signs of insect damage.

Prepare a batch of pectin, as directed on the box, and pre-treat the berries in the pectin mixture to preserve the color.

Oven Drying: You can oven dry any type of berries as long as you prepare it correctly. Put berries on a cheesecloth or cotton sheet before placing them on oven racks. Dry the berries in a 145-degree F^o oven, with the doors propped open so steam can escape. Check a few berries occasionally to check their progress. They should be dry but still pliable when they have cooled. The berries will be dry in 4 to 12 hours.

Food Dehydrator: An electric dehydrator is energy efficient and can be operated at low temperatures needed to maintain nutritive values in the food. Your electric food dehydrator should have some sort of heat control and a fan to maintain air circulation during the drying process. You will know your food is dried when you touch it, and it is leathery with no pockets of moisture. If you are testing fruit, you can tear a piece in half. If you see moisture beads along the tear, it is not dry enough. Berry drying time depends on the size and thickness, but tends to dry anywhere from 10 to 20 hours.



Preserving Wild Berries:

Berries - Whole

Procedures for the following Wild Berries:

- Chokecherries
- Huckleberries
- Gooseberries
- Golden Currents
- Service Berries

Quantity: An average of 12 pounds is needed per canner load of 7 quarts; an average of 8 pounds is needed per canner load of 9 pints. A 24-quart crate weighs 36 pounds and yields 18 to 24 quarts - an average of 1¾ pounds per quart.

Quality: Choose ripe, sweet berries with uniform color.

Procedure: Wash 1 or 2 quarts of berries at a time. Drain, cap, and stem if necessary. For gooseberries, snip off heads and tails with scissors. Prepare and boil preferred syrup, if desired. Add ½ cup syrup, juice, or water to each clean jar.

Hot pack –Heat berries in boiling water for 30 seconds and drain. Fill jars and cover with hot juice, leaving ½-inch headspace.

Raw pack – Fill jars with any of the raw berries, shaking down gently while filling. Cover with hot syrup, juice, or water, leaving ½-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process.

Table 1. Recommended process time for **Berries, whole** in a boiling-water canner.

		Process Time at Altitudes of			
Style of Pack	Jar Size	0 - 1,000 ft	1,001 - 3,000 ft	<u>3,001 - 6,000 ft</u>	Above 6,000 ft
Hot	Pints or Quarts	15 min	20	<u>20</u>	25
Raw	Pints	15	20	<u>20</u>	25
	Quarts	20	25	<u>30</u>	35

Table 2. Recommended process time for **Berries, whole** in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

			Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of			
Style of Pack	Jar Size	Process Time (Min)	0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	<u>4,001 - 6,000 ft</u>	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Hot	Pints or Quarts	8	6	7	<u>8</u>	9
Raw	Pints	8	6	7	<u>8</u>	9
	Quarts	10	6	7	<u>8</u>	9

Canning Recipe Guide

Probably the best thing to do with most wild berries is to extract the juice for making jams, jellies or syrups. Listed below are simple guidelines to follow so you can preserve your favorite wild berries and store them safely.

Preparing the Fruit

- Unless using added pectin, use $\frac{1}{4}$ slightly under-ripe fruit and $\frac{3}{4}$ just ripe fruit. If you're adding pectin, you can use all ripe fruit.
- Prepare fruit in small batches, enough for one recipe.
- Sort the fruit, discarding all damaged portions.
- Wash fruits, but do not remove skins or cores, since the pectin is more concentrated there. Cut into small pieces.
- Wash berries carefully to prevent loss of juice. Drain, remove caps and stems.

Extracting the Juice

- Place fruit into a flat-bottomed saucepan and add cold water, use only enough water to prevent scorching. Crush soft fruits to start the flow of juice.
- Bring to a boil on high heat. Stir to prevent scorching.
- Reduce heat.
- Grapes and berries need 10 minutes or less to cook until soft. Do not overcook; excess boiling will destroy the pectin, flavor and color.
- Pour everything into a damp jelly bag and suspend the bag to drain the juice. The clearest jelly comes from juice that has dripped through a jelly bag without pressing or squeezing.
- If a fruit press is used to extract the juice, the juice should be restrained through a jelly bag.

Basic Recipe for Making Berry Syrups

Ingredients

- 4 cups prepared Berry Juice
- 4 cups Sugar

Directions

Mix the Berry Juice and Sugar, bring to a boil. Boil rapidly for 2 minutes. Skim off foam. Ladle hot syrup into hot jars, leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ inch headspace, adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner for 15 minutes.

Western Chokecherry:

Chokecherry Jelly

Ingredients:

- 3 cups Chokecherry Juice
- 6-1/2 cups Sugar
- 1 bottle Liquid Fruit Pectin
- 1/4 tsp. Almond Extract (optional)

To Prepare Juice:

Wash and crush 4 pounds ripe chokecherries. Add 1 cup water and simmer for 15 minutes. Squeeze juice. Measures 3 cups chokecherry juice.

Directions:

Pour juice into large heavy kettle, add sugar and stir to mix. Place over high heat bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Stir in pectin and bring to a full, rolling boil and boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, skim foam from top and stir for 5 minutes. Add almond extract, pour into hot jars leaving ¼ inch headspace, and adjust lids and process in boiling water bath for 15 minutes.

Chokecherry - Applebutter

Ingredients:

- 4 cups cooked apple (pulp)
- 2 cups cooked chokecherries (pulp)
- 5 cups sugar
- 1/2 tsp. almond extract

Directions:

Prepare pulp of both fruits first by putting cooked fruit (unsweetened) through a sieve or food mill into a large saucepan. Heat to a boil, stirring carefully to prevent scorching. Add sugar; stir constantly until it just begins to thicken. Add extract and blend. Ladle into hot jars to within 1/4 inch of the top of jar. Wipe rims. Adjust lids. Process in boiling water bath for 15 minutes.

Old-Time Chokecherry Jam

Remove stems from chokecherries and wash. Drain. Add 1 cup water to every 4 cups of fruit. Place over low heat and simmer just until fruit is tender, stirring occasionally. Rub pulp through a medium sieve. Measure this and add an equal amount of sugar. Place over moderate heat and stir until sugar has melted. Bring to a full rolling boil and cook until mixture sheets (220 degrees F^o) off spoon.* Stir frequently. Pour into hot jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims, adjust lids and rings. Process in a boiling water bath canner 15 minutes.

Golden Current

Current Jelly

Ingredients:

- 4 pounds Fresh Currants
- 1 cup Water
- 7 cups Sugar
- 4 ounces Liquid Fruit Pectin

Directions:

Place the currants into a large pot, and crush with a potato masher or berry crusher if you have one. Pour in 1 cup of water, and bring to a boil. Simmer for 10 minutes. Strain the fruit through a jelly cloth or cheese cloth, and measure out 5 cups of the juice. Pour the juice into a large saucepan, and stir in the sugar. Bring to a rapid boil over high heat, and stir in the liquid pectin immediately. Return to a full rolling boil, and allow boiling for 30 seconds. Remove from heat and skim off foam from the top. Ladle or pour into hot 1/2 pint jars leaving a 1/4 inch headspace. Wipe rims, adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner for 15 minutes.

Current Jelly Sauce

Ingredients:

- 1-1/2 cups Current Jelly
- 3/4 tsp. Dry Mustard

Directions:

Melt jelly over medium heat. Stir until smooth. Add dry mustard, stirring well. Boil for 5 minutes, remove from heat and serve. Yields 8 servings. This is an excellent sauce for Venison.

To serve sauce with Pork, add 3 Tbsp. Horseradish to sauce when heating, pour over pork.

Currant-Rhubarb Jam

Ingredients:

- 1-1/2 pounds Rhubarb (1 quart)
- 1 pound Currants (1 quart)
- 1 package Pectin
- 8-1/2 cups Sugar

Directions:

Remove stems and tails from currants; combine with, chopped rhubarb. Mash thoroughly in a 2 quart pan, add pectin, and stir until dissolved. Heat to a boil, add sugar, stirring constantly, bring to a full rolling boil and continue stirring. Boil for 4 minutes. Remove from heat, skim off foam and pour into hot jars, adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner for 15 minutes. Yields about 6 pints.

Elderberries:

- *Blanch elderberries for 1 minute before tasting or eating. Elderberries are dangerous to some people if eaten raw.*
- *Add 1 Tbls. lemon juice per quart of elderberries to enhance the flavor. If you are going to use commercial pectin follow their recommendations for lemon juice amounts.*

Elderberry Jelly

Ingredients

- 3-1/2 cups Elderberry juice (3-1/2 pounds ripe berries)
- 1/2 cup Lemon Juice
- 1 package Fruit Pectin

Directions

Prepare elderberries by removing large stems. Place in large pan and crush. Cover and simmer 15 minutes. Strain juice and measure to 3-1/2 cups. If you do not have 3-1/2 cups add apple juice to make up the difference. Add lemon juice and pour back into pan.

Bring to a low boil and add sugar, stirring constantly. Add pectin, and bring to a full rolling boil. Boil for 3 minutes and remove from heat. Skim off foam and ladle into hot jars, adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner for 15 minutes. Yields about 5 half pints.

Elderberry Jam

Ingredients:

- 4 cups Elderberries
- 3 cups Sugar

Directions:

If the berries are too tart, add 1 cup of sugar per 1 cup of berries this will make for a sweeter jam. Mash elderberries in a 2 quart pan, cook over low heat to avoid scorching, add sugar and stir continuously until sugar is dissolved. Bring to a full rolling boil until 220° F. Pour into hot jars, adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner for 15 minutes.

Elderberry Pudding

Ingredients:

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------|-------------|-----------------|--------|--------------|
| • <i>Combine:</i> | 2 cups | Flour | <i>Combine:</i> | 4 cups | Elderberries |
| | 4 tsp. | Baking Soda | | 2 cups | Sugar |
| | 1 tsp. | Salt | | 1 tsp. | Lemon Juice |
| | 1 Tbls. | Butter | | | |
| | 3/4 cup | Milk | | | |

Directions:

Combine the two bowls into one and mix thoroughly. Pour into a buttered baking dish, cover tightly and put in the oven at 250° F for 30 minutes. Serve warm or chilled.

Huckleberries

Huckleberry Freezer Jam

Ingredients:

- 3 cups Huckleberries
- 6 cups Sugar
- 2 Tbls. Lemon Juice
- 1 package Fruit Pectin

Directions:

Crush huckleberries in a large bowl. Add lemon juice and slowly stir in sugar. Mix until sugar is dissolved (approximately 3 minutes) then add pectin and stir quickly and thoroughly. Ladle quickly into freezer safe containers. Let stand until set, store in freezer. Yields 8 cups.

HuckleBuckle

Ingredients:

- *Cream Together:* 1/4 cup Butter
- 1/2 cup Sugar
- *Add to Creamed Mixture:* 1 cup Sifted Flour
- 1 tsp. Baking Powder
- 1/4 tsp, Salt
- 1/2 Cup Milk
- *Mix well and spread into an 8 inch glass baking dish.*
- *Blend:* 2-1/2 cups Huckleberries
- 3/4 cup Sugar
- *Pour on top of batter. (in baking dish)*
- *Mix:* 1/2 cup Boiling Water
- 1 Tbls. Butter
- *Pour over berries and creamed mixture. (in baking dish)*

Directions:

Bake in a pre-heated oven at 375° F for 45-50 minutes. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream if desired. Yields 6 servings.

Huckleberry Ice Cream Topping

Ingredients:

- 2 cups Huckleberries (Mashed) 1 cup Sugar
- 2/3 cup Water 1 Tbls. Cornstarch
- 1 tsp. lemon juice

Directions:

Put all ingredients except cornstarch in a medium sauce pan and cook on low heat until low boil. Turn heat down and add cornstarch slowly, when mixed thoroughly remove from heat, let stand 20 minutes. Pour over vanilla ice cream for a yummy treat or spread on buttered toast for breakfast.

Huckleberry Ice Cream in a Bag

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup Half-and-Half
- 2 Tbls. Sugar
- 1 tsp. Vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup Huckleberries (Mashed)

In a medium sized bowl mix all ingredients thoroughly and place aside.

Supplies:

- 6 Tbls. Rock Salt
- 1 Pint-Size Plastic Storage Bag
- 1 Gallon-Size Plastic Storage Bag
- 3 Trays Ice cubes

Directions:

1. Fill the gallon-sized storage bag half full of ice, and add the rock salt. Seal the bag.
2. Fill the pint-sized storage bag with the ice cream mixture and tightly seal the bag.
3. Open the gallon sized storage bag place the small bag inside the large one, and seal it again carefully.
4. Shake until the mixture is ice cream, which takes about 5 minutes.
5. Wipe off the top of the small bag and open it carefully. Enjoy!

Huckleberry Muffins

Ingredients:

Cream together

- 1/4 cup Margarine or Butter
- 1/2 cup Sugar

Add

- 3/4 cup Milk
- 1 Egg (slightly beaten)

Add

- 1 3/4 cup Sifted Flour
- 1 -1/2 tsp. Baking Powder
- 1/2 tsp. Salt

Carefully Mix

- 1 cup Huckleberries
- 1 Tbsp. Flour

*** Note: You can use:**

- Fresh Berries
- Thawed Frozen Berries
- Drained Canned Berries

Direction:

Fold floured berries into muffin mix. Fill greased or papered muffin tins 3/4 full. Place in a 425° pre-heated oven for 25 minutes. Yields 15 muffins.

Creeping Mahonia (Oregon Grape)

Oregon Grape Butter

Ingredients:

- 6 quarts Stemmed Oregon Grapes
- 4 quarts Apples (quartered) do not peel
- 4 cups Sugar

Directions:

In a large kettle cover grapes with water, bring to a boil and simmer 20 minutes. Drain juice through a loosely woven cheesecloth, set juice aside for jelly (see recipe below). Return to kettle, add quartered apples, with grape pulp still in the cheesecloth, keep in kettle to add more flavor, cover apples with water. Bring to a boil and simmer 20 minutes. Drain. Set juice aside for jelly (see recipe below). Discard the cheesecloth with the grape seeds. Put the remaining apple pulp through a sieve. Measures 5 cups. Place in kettle, add sugar and heat to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cook to desired consistency, pour into hot jars, adjust lids and rings then process for 15 minutes in a boiling water canner. Makes 4 half pints.

Oregon Grape Jelly

Ingredients:

- 1 medium Lemon (juiced and strained)
- 6 cups Oregon Grape Juice
- 1 package Liquid Pectin
- 7-1/2 cups Sugar

Directions:

In a large kettle add the strained lemon juice to the Oregon Grape Juice and heat to a rolling boil. Add the pectin and again heat to a boil. Slowly stir in the sugar and boil for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim foam. Pour into hot jars, adjust lids and rings then process for 15 minutes in a boiling water canner. NOTE: Use the grape juice and the grape-apple juice from the Oregon Grape Butter for this recipe.

Easy Basic Berry Pies

Ingredients:

- 3 cups Fresh Berries (your choice)
- 1/4 cup Flour
- 2 Tbsp. Butter or Margarine
- 1 cup Sugar
- 1/2 tsp. Salt
- 2 Medium Pastry Crusts

Directions:

Sift sugar, flour and salt together and gently mix with the berries. Pour into a pastry lined 9" pie pan. Dot with margarine. Cover with top crust, seal and crimp the edges and cut a vent in the top. Bake in a 450° pre-heated oven for 10 minutes, reduce heat to 375° and bake for 30 minutes until golden brown. Serve with vanilla ice cream. Note: If you make your own hand made pie crust that is even better!

ATTENTION:

For your convenience all Recipes have been pre-adjusted for the altitude of "3001-6000 feet".

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