



# *Preserving Wyoming's Wild Berries and Fruit*

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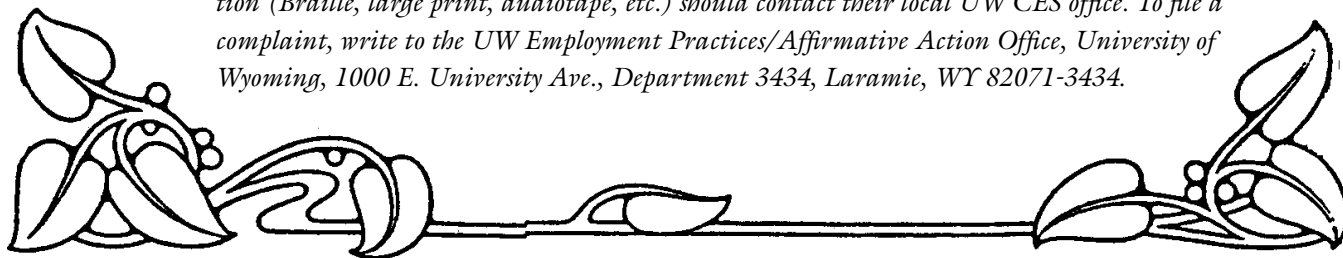
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# Picking Wild Berries

## Picking Wild Berries

When you are out camping or hiking in Wonderful Wyoming, you can pick berries to make jellies to remind you of your summer outing all year long.

## Tips of Caution

Wearing proper clothing is very important when wild berry picking. You may tramp through weeds and brush so wear slacks or jeans, a long-sleeved blouse or shirt, and sturdy shoes. It is also wise to wear an old hat or scarf. Be careful where you walk, watch out for anthills, sharp sticks and poison ivy. The illustration below will help you identify poison ivy. This plant contains nonvolatile oil in practically all of its parts. This oil is poisonous to most people when it comes in contact with the skin. The three leaves warn "*Don't Touch Me!*"

Poison Ivy



## Equipment Needed

A small plastic pail with a handle is a convenient help when picking berries. You can attach the handle to your belt or tie a string through the handle and tie it around your waist or over the shoulder. This leaves both hands free so you will not have to bend too much. The berries will stain your hands so wear gloves.

## What to Pick

Use only firm fruits naturally high in pectin. Select a mixture of  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{4}$  under-ripe fruit. You should also protect the bushes so there will be berries the next year.

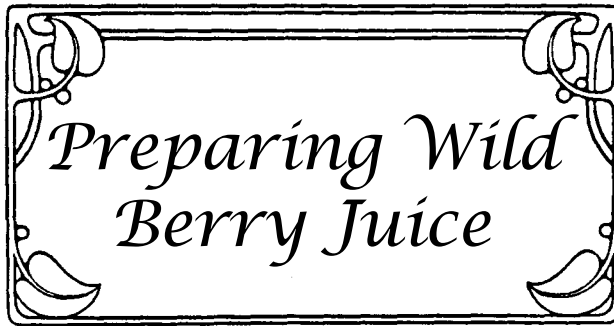
If unable to identify berries from illustrations in this booklet, check with your local University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service office or a wild plant expert before using.

## When to Harvest

Berry picking time varies with the temperatures during the spring and summer months, the amount of moisture during the growing season, and the location of the bushes. Berries at lower elevations may ripen one to two weeks ahead of those a few hundred feet higher up the mountain. Late summer (from early August until frost) you can pick wild berries. Buffaloberries, however, can be picked after a frost. Wait to pick until the majority of the berries are ripe.

## Care of Berries

Do not put more than a few quarts of berries in one container to avoid crushing them as you transport them home. Keep berries in a cool place until they are ready to be preserved.



## Preparing Wild Berry Juice

1. Pick over the fruit carefully and discard any overripe or spoiled berries.
2. Wash the fruit quickly but thoroughly and lift out of the water. (Do not let the fruit soak in water). Removal of the stems and pits of cherries and berries is not necessary since the juice is strained from the pulp.
3. Place berries in a large kettle and barely cover with water. Heat the fruit at a fairly high temperature until boiling and then reduce the temperature. The mixture should still be slowly boiling. Cook for 10 minutes or until a deep-colored liquid forms. The berries can be crushed as they cook, or the first juice can be drained into another kettle and the berries can be cooked a second time. Crush the berries as they cook the second time to release more juice.
4. Strain all cooked fruit through a "jelly bag" or three thicknesses of cheese cloth. If you do not have a jelly bag, you may make one out of an old sheet or pillowcase using two pieces of material, 8 inches by 12 inches sewn together on three sides. Dampen the jelly bag first. This encourages the juice to start dripping through the bag. Squeezing the jelly bag forces through bits of pulp that will cloud the jelly. Leftover pulp can be used to make jams and butters along with the cooked fruit still in the kettle.  
  
NOTE: If there is not enough juice available from the berries for the recipe, other fruit juice can be added to the wild berry juice or if there is only ½ cup difference, water can be added.
5. The juice can be used immediately to make jelly or syrup, and the pulp can be used to make jams. If you do not have time to make the jelly you may can

the juice. Pour the hot juice into clean empty pint or quart jars leaving ¼-inch head space. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water bath according to the following chart:

<b>Pints/quarts</b>	
1,001-6,000 ft.	10 min.
More than 6,000 ft.	15 min.

### **Information about Pectin**

Proper amounts of fruit, pectin, acid, and sugar are needed to make a jellied fruit product. Some kinds of fruit have enough natural pectin to gel. Others require added pectin, particularly when they are used for making jellies which should be firm enough to hold their shape. All fruits have more pectin when they are under ripe.

Commercial fruit pectin, made from apples or citrus fruits, are on the market in either liquid or powdered form. Be sure to use the correct type in a recipe developed for that form of pectin.

Many homemakers prefer the added-pectin method for making jellied fruit products because fully ripe fruit can be used, cooking time is shorter and is standardized so that there is no question when the product is done, and the yield from a given amount of fruit is greater.

Fruit pectin should be stored in a cool, dry place so it will keep its gel strength. It should not be held over from one year to the next. This pectin may be used with any fruit.

# Making Jelly

**Important safety tip: all jelly products must be processed in a boiling water bath. Do not use paraffin seals.**

The beginning or the seasoned jelly-maker should review these steps:

1. Review preparing juice for jelly on page 4. For a clear jelly, strain the juice through a jelly bag or several thicknesses of cheese cloth for several minutes. Do not squeeze the bag because pulp may be forced through and cause cloudy jelly. Instead, the juice may be refrigerated overnight, and by morning the sediment will settle to the bottom. Pour the juice off carefully to avoid disturbing the sediment.
2. Measure the juice accurately into a large (4 quart) flat-bottom saucepan. When jelly boils it increases two to three times in volume. Powdered or liquid pectin may be used to make the jelly and will generally give a larger yield. The order of combining ingredients depends on the type of pectin used. Complete directions for using pectin are included with the commercial packages. Bring to a quick hard boil over high heat, stirring occasionally. Add pre-measured sugar all at once. Bring to a full rolling boil (a boil that cannot be stirred down). Boil hard for one minute, stirring constantly.

The following tests may be used to see if the juice has cooked long enough to gel.

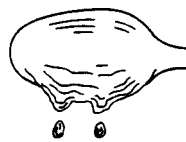
- a. **Temperature test** – Before cooking jelly, take the temperature of boiling water with a jelly, candy, or deep-fat thermometer. Cook the jelly mixture to a temperature 8 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the boiling point of water in your area. The thermometer should be in a vertical position and read at eye level.
- b. **Refrigerator test** – Pour about two tablespoons of boiling jelly on a cold plate, and put it in the freezing compartment of the refrigerator for a few minutes. If it gels or thickens so as to spread smoothly on bread, the jelly

mixture has boiled enough. Remove the kettle from the stove when making the test.

- c. **Spoon or sheet test** – Dip a metal spoon in the boiling jelly mixture. Then raise the spoon at least one foot above the kettle, out of the steam. Turn the spoon so syrup runs off. Jelly drops at first are light and syrupy, and then as it boils it thickens and coats the spoon. The syrup will gel when the drops flow together and “sheet” off the spoon.



Jelly drops are first thin and syrupy.



As the liquid cooks it becomes heavier and the two drops flow closer together.



The jelly point is reached when the jelly breaks from the spoon in a sheet.

3. Remove from heat and skim off foam.
4. Pour the hot jelly, jam, or preserve mixture immediately into clean canning jars to within ¼ inch of the top. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water bath according to the following chart:  
  
For half-pint jars  
1,001 to 6,000 ft. 10 min.  
6,001 to 8,000 ft. 15 min.
5. Label jars with the type of jelly and dates made, and store them in a cool, dark, dry location.

## Preparation of Empty Jars

Wash empty jars in hot water with detergent and rinse well by hand or wash in a dishwasher. Hold clean jars in warm water until ready to use. Fill jars with food, add lids, and tighten screw bands.

## Possible Causes of Soft Jelly

Some jellies, like chokecherry, do not set up right away so let them stand for 24 hours.

Soft jellies may be caused by one or more of the following: too much juice in mixture, too little sugar added, mixture not acidic enough, too much made at one time, not cooking mixture long enough, and/or cooking commercial pectin too long.

## Tips for Improving Soft Jelly

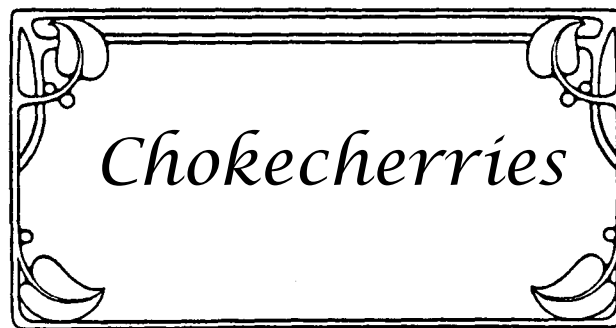
If the jelly does not gel, it may be used as a syrup for pancakes or over ice cream and puddings. Soft jellies can sometimes be improved by recooking according to the directions given below. It is best to recook only 4 to 6 cups of jelly at one time.

To remake with powdered pectin: for each quart of jelly, mix ¼-cup sugar, ½-cup water, 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice, and 4 teaspoons powdered pectin. Bring to a boil while stirring constantly. Boil hard ½ minute.

Remove from the heat, quickly skim foam off jelly, and fill clean jars, leaving ¼-inch head space. Adjust new lids and process according to the chart on page 5.

To remake with liquid pectin: for each quart of jelly, measure ¾-cup sugar, 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice and 2 tablespoons liquid pectin. Bring jelly only to boil over high heat, while stirring. Remove from heat and quickly add the sugar, lemon juice, and pectin. Bring to a full rolling boil, stirring constantly. Boil hard for 1 minute. Quickly skim off the foam, and fill clean jars, leaving ¼-inch head space. Adjust new lids, and process according to the chart on page 5.

To remake without added pectin: for each quart of jelly, add 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice. Heat to boiling and boil for 3 to 4 minutes. Use one of the tests described on page 5 to determine jelly doneness. Remove from heat, quickly skim off the foam, and fill clean jars, leaving ¼-inch head space. Adjust new lids, and process according to the chart on page 5.



American Indians found this wild fruit good to eat raw or dried. The ripe fruit was often ground up, stone and all, and then dried in the sun. When dry, it was stored and eaten later.

Chokecherries grow on shrubs or small trees from 3 to 10 feet tall. The leaves are 1½ to 4 inches long. The flowers are white, and pea-sized fruit grow in clusters. When the cherries are ripe, they are usually dark purple or black in color. Sometimes there are cherries of reddish or orange color. When harvesting, pick the light red and green ones too, because they add flavor and pectin.

Chokecherry fruits are popular in jelly making. Any recipe for sour cherry or elderberry jelly can be used with chokecherry fruit. Mixtures of half chokecherry

juice and half apple or red currant juice also make a tasty product. Red currant juice does not influence the chokecherry flavor like apple juice.

Chokecherry





### My Favorite Chokecherry Jelly

- 5 cups chokecherry juice
- 7 cups sugar
- 1 package powdered pectin

Follow steps for making jelly on page 5.

### Chokecherry Syrup with Added Pectin

- 4 cups chokecherry juice
- 4 cups sugar
- 1 package powdered pectin

Combine juice, sugar, and pectin in a large kettle. Bring to a boil, and cook until mixture coats a metal spoon (similar to the way gravy coats a spoon). Pour into clean half-pint jars. Process in boiling water bath according to the chart on page 5.

### Chokecherry Syrup without Added Pectin

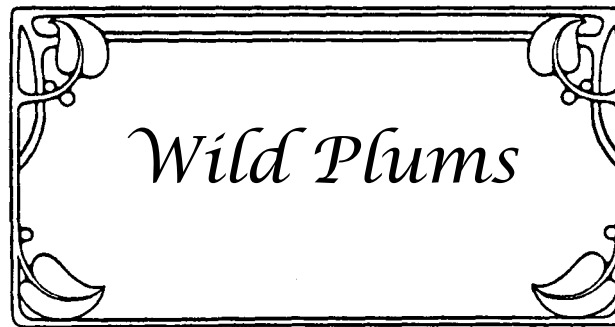
- 4 cups chokecherry juice
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup

Combine ingredients in pan and boil for 3 minutes. Pour into clean half-pint jars. Process in boiling water bath according to the chart on page 5.

### Pioneer Chokecherry Syrup

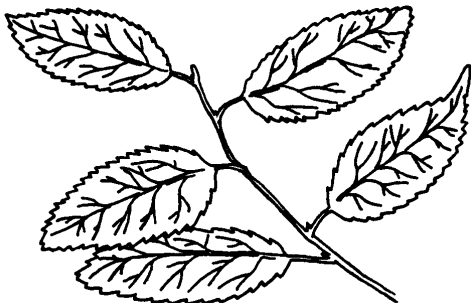
- 4 cups chokecherry juice
- 4 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon cream of tartar

Cook over medium heat until mixture coats a metal spoon (similar to the way gravy coats a spoon). Refrigerate for immediate use, or pour into clean half-pint jars. Process in boiling water bath according to the chart on page 5.



Wild plums grow on tall shrubs (or small trees) and reach a height of 14 to 16 feet. They frequently grow in thickets. The leaves are from 2½ to 4 inches long. The wild plum is round or oval in shape, slightly larger than a marble and is orange-red when ripe.

Follow directions for preparing the fruit on page 4. Boil for 15 to 20 minutes or until the skins are tender. Tart wild plums are high in pectin. The fruit can be boiled a second time for extra juice. To make jam or butter, squeeze out the pits. Some recipes call for whole seeded plums. Other recipes recommend pressing plums through a sieve to remove skins.



Wild Plum

### Wild Plum Jelly

- 5½ cups juice
- 1 box powdered pectin
- 7½ cups sugar

Follow steps for making jelly on page 5.

### Pioneer Plum Jam

For every 1 cup of plum pulp (with skins) add ¾ cup sugar. Cook over low heat until desirable consistency for spreading. Stir often to prevent scorching. The mixture thickens when cool.

Fill clean jars to within ¼ inch of the top with hot mixture. Wipe rim clean. Adjust new lids, and process in boiling water bath according to the chart on page 5.

### Canning Plums

Whole plums can be canned and used as winter fruit served plain or with cream. Wash plums and discard those which are wormy or spoiled. Heat plums to boiling in syrup made of 2 cups sugar and 4 cups water or in water.

Place hot fruit to ½ inch of top of jars. Cover with boiling syrup or water leaving ½-inch head space. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water bath according to the following chart:

	Pints	Quarts
1,001 to 3,000 ft.	25 min.	30 min.
3,001 to 6,000 ft.	30 min.	35 min.
Over 6,000 ft.	35 min.	40 min.

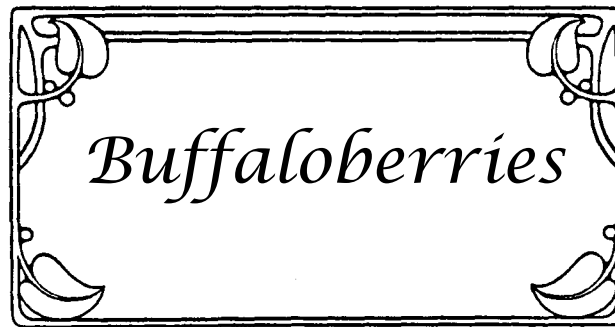
### Plum Butter

Prepare plums as described on page 4. Pour off juice and use for jelly. Squeeze pits out of the remaining fruit.

Press through a sieve to remove skins. (Pitted fruit can be pureed in a blender instead of sieving it.)

Measure sieved fruit, and add one half as much sugar, if desired, for each pint of fruit and ¼-teaspoon cinnamon, 1/8-teaspoon nutmeg, and 1/8-teaspoon cloves. Bring to a boil, then simmer, uncovered, stirring frequently, until desired spreading consistency. Remember, it is thicker when cold.

Spoon mixture into clean half-pint jars, leaving ¼-inch head space. Process in boiling water bath according to the chart on page 5.



American Indians gathered these berries by hand picking or by spreading a blanket or sheet on the ground and shaking the fruit onto the cover. These fruits were eaten raw, sometimes cooked into a sauce which was used to flavor buffalo meat (hence the Indian name for the berry), or they were dried for winter use. To some, the raw fruit tastes sweeter and less acidic after the berries are harvested following a frost.

Buffaloberries (also known as bushberries and buck or bull berries) grow on shrubs or small trees that have thorny, silvery, scaly twigs. Leaves are ¾ to 2 inches long and are silver-scaly on both sides. The fruit is a round, one-seeded berry about 1/8-to ¼-inch wide, scarlet to golden in color when ripe, and grouped along a stem.

Buffaloberry



### Buffaloberry Jelly

For every one cup of buffaloberry juice, use ¾ cup of sugar. Extract juice following the instructions on page 4. The buffaloberry liquid will be pale in color (a peach-pink) and will look “soapy.” Follow steps in making jelly on page 5. This makes a tart jelly, and you may wish to use some apple juice to have a milder flavor. (Use one cup tart apple juice to one cup buffaloberry juice).

This jelly is clear with a color of golden honey. It has a taste similar to currant jelly. If made with pectin, follow proportions given for red currant jelly.

### Drying Buffaloberries – American Indian Method

1. Wash berries to remove stems and leaves
2. Put berries in a food grinder, or grind on a stone to a mushy consistency. Make soft berries into patties.
3. Place patties on wax paper in the sun.
4. Rotate these daily so they do not mold. Patties should be dry in about a week. If they are brittle and break when bent, they are dry.
5. Store in a jar/can with lid, in a cool dry place.

## Suggested Use of Dried Berries

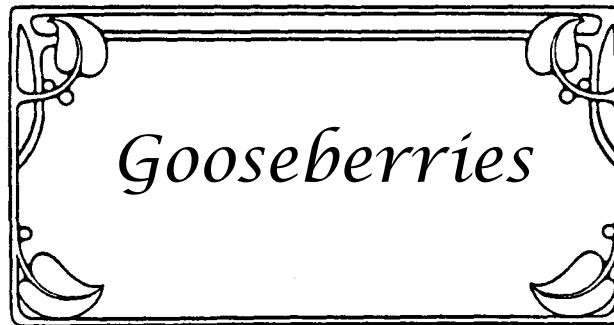
### Syrup

- 3 cups berries
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups sugar

Soak berries in water until tender. Bring berries to a boil, and strain to remove seeds. Add sugar. Refrigerate leftover syrup.

### Berry Gravy

Make syrup with berries. Thicken syrup with flour and mixture. Boil until thick, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, and store in refrigerator in clean, covered containers.



Gooseberries grow wild and in home gardens. They grow on shrubs 4 to 5 feet tall. The twigs are covered with spines or stiff bristles. The fruit a red, wine, or black color when ripe and may be smooth or covered with hairs or prickles. However, gooseberries can be used when still green and no longer cause your mouth to pucker when tasted.

Gooseberry



### Gooseberry Jelly

- 3½ cups gooseberry juice
- ¼-cup lemon juice
- 1 package powdered pectin
- 5 cups sugar

Prepare the juice by grinding stemmed fruit through a food grinder or follow general directions on page 4. It will take between 5 to 6 cups of berries to make 3½ cups juice. Add ½ cup of water to the ground berries, and boil for 5 minutes.

Follow steps for making jelly on page 5.

### Gooseberry Jam

- 5½ cups ground fruit
- 7 cups sugar
- 1 package powdered pectin

Add pectin to fruit, and stir well. Then cook jam according to the direction on pectin package.

Process according to the instructions given on page 5.

### Canned Gooseberries

Canned gooseberries can be eaten as a sauce or used in pies. Wash and stem berries. Add ½-cup water for each quart of fruit.

Heat berries in boiling water for 30 seconds and drain. Fill pint jars and cover with hot juice, leaving ½-inch head space. Adjust lids. Process in boiling water bath according to the chart below:

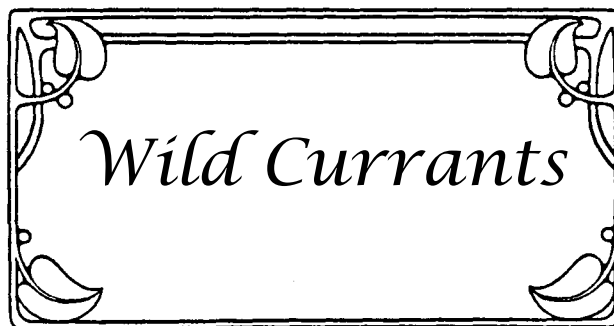
For pints and quarts	
1,001 to 6,000 ft.	20 min.
Over 6,000 ft.	25 min.

Add sugar before making into pies or when serving as sauce.

### Gooseberry Pie

- 2 cups gooseberries
- ¾- to 1-cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons quick cooking tapioca or flour
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- Grated rind of 1 lemon (optional)
- 1 unbaked pie shell and top

Wash and stem the gooseberries. Add sugar and tapioca to gooseberries, and let stand while preparing the pastry. Turn into pastry-lined pie pan, dot with butter, and top with pastry to form a two crust pie. Bake at 450 degrees Fahrenheit for 10 minutes, then reduce to 350 degrees Fahrenheit and continue baking for 30 minutes.



Currant bushes are 3 to 8 feet tall. The leaves may be up to 2 inches wide. The flower is bright yellow with a fragrant odor. The fruit is glove-shaped and about ¼-inch in diameter, growing singly along the stem. When ripe, currants vary in color from red to black. They grow successfully in home gardens.

Wild Currants



### Currant Ice Cream Sauce

- 1 cup washed and stemmed currants
- ½-cup sugar
- ⅓-cup sugar or honey

Cook currants in water for 10 minutes. Add sugar or honey, and boil gently for 5 more minutes. Serve hot or chilled over vanilla ice cream.

### Currant Jelly

- 6½ cups currant juice
- 1 package powdered pectin
- 7 cups sugar

To prepare the juice, crush the fully ripe fruit before cooking. Then follow the steps for making jelly on page 5. For a variation on this recipe, mix currant juice with equal parts of apple juice.

### Currant Punch

Sweeten hot currant juice to taste, stirring to dissolve sugar. Cool. Add club soda or ginger ale at serving time. Other fruit juices may be combined with the currant for a flavorful punch. For a special touch, add a small scoop of ice cream at serving time.

# Wild Grapes

The wild grape fruits were eaten raw by American Indians and dried in the sun for future use. The leaves were used to wrap other foods, such as rice or ground meat, which was then roasted or baked.

Wild grapes grow on woody vines which scramble and climb by tendrils. They grow along roadsides, thickets, and streambeds. The leaves are big and broad and appear lobed. The fruit is a juicy berry not more than ½-inch wide (smaller than cultivated grapes) and almost black in color when ripe.

## Wild Grapes



## Grape Jelly

The simplest way to make grape jelly is to follow the directions for making cultivated grape jelly as given in the pectin package.

## Wild Grape Butter

6 quarts stemmed and washed grapes  
Water to cover  
4 quarts apples  
4 cups sugar

Cover the washed grapes with water and simmer for 20 minutes. Strain off juice and make into jelly. Put the grape pulp into a cheesecloth bag. Return to the kettle in the bag. The bag keeps grape seeds out of the apples but gives a grape flavor to the butter. Add apples which have been quartered but not peeled.

Cover with water. Bring to a boil, and then simmer 20 minutes. Drain. Juice can be used for Grape/Apple Jelly (see next recipe). Put apples through sieve and measure 5 cups. Place in kettle, add sugar, and heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Cook to desired consistency. Spoon into clean half-pint jars, leaving ¼-inch head space. Process according to the chart on page 5.

## Grape/Apple Jelly

5 cups grape/apple juice  
7 cups sugar  
1 package powdered pectin

Follow steps for jelly making on page 5.

The jelly can be made from the juice left over from the Wild Grape Butter recipe.

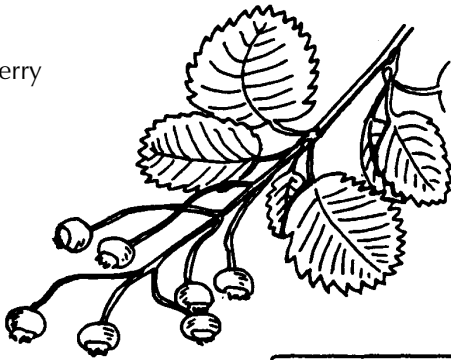
## Grape Juice

Wash and stem fresh, firm-ripe grapes. Put 1 cup grapes in a hot quart jar. Add ½-to 1-cup sugar. Fill clean jars with juice leaving ¼-inch head space. Adjust lids. Process according to the instructions given on page 5.

## Service Berries

Serviceberries grow on shrubs or small trees 10 to 14 feet high. The leaves are oval to nearly round with toothed edges. The fruit is  $\frac{3}{8}$  to  $\frac{5}{8}$  inches in diameter and purple red to black when ripe.

Service Berry



### Serviceberry Jelly

$3\frac{1}{3}$  cups juice  
1 package powdered pectin  
5 cups sugar

Mix ingredients and follow steps for jelly making on page 5. Variation:  $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup lemon juice may be added to the juice before cooking.

## Dandelions

Dandelion



In the spring of the year there is an abundance of dandelion blossoms. To make dandelion jelly, gather the familiar blossoms early in the morning when there is higher nectar content.

### Dandelion Jelly

Gather 1-quart dandelion blossoms, and add 1-quart water. Boil 3 minutes, and then drain well. To the 3 cups of juice add one teaspoon of orange or lemon flavoring, one package powdered pectin, and  $4\frac{1}{2}$  cups sugar. Boil 3 minutes. Pour into clean jars, and process according to the instructions on page 5. This jelly tastes different and is clear like apple jelly.

# Rose Hips

Rose hips should be gathered after the first autumn frost. They grow in singles along the stems of rose bushes. These seed pods are first green in color and then change to red as they ripen. They are about the size of a small cherry.

Rose Hips



## Dried Rose Hips

Cut rose hips in half, and remove the seeds with the point of a knife. Dry as quickly as possible in a slightly warm oven.

## Rose Hip Jelly

4 cups rose hips  
2 pounds sugar

Prepare rose hips by removing outside covering. Add just enough water to cover, and bring to a boil. Add sugar and simmer until the fruit is soft, strain, and return juice to kettle. Bring juice to a boil again, and test for jelly. If not to gel stage, boil a little longer. Process according to the instructions on page 5.

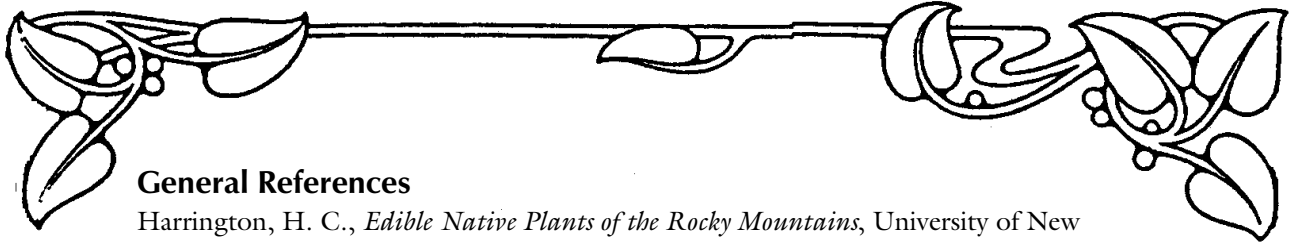
## Candied Rose Hips

Candied rose hips are used successfully in such products as cookies, puddings, and upside-down cake.

1½ cups rose hips  
½-cup water  
¼-cup water

Remove seeds from the rose hips. Boil 10 minutes in the sugar-water syrup. Lift fruit from syrup with a skimmer, and drain on waxed paper. Dust with sugar, and dry slowly in a very warm oven adding more sugar if the fruit seems sticky. Store between sheets of waxed paper in a closely covered, metal container until used.

**Uses for candied rose hips:** in your favorite cookie recipe (oatmeal cookies, fruit squares, or filled sugar cookies), in puddings with added grated lemon rind, or in place of nuts or fruits.



### General References

Harrington, H. C., *Edible Native Plants of the Rocky Mountains*, University of New Mexico Press, New Mexico, 1967.

*Wild Berry Recipes*, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska, 1973.

### Resources

A special thank you to the following contributors who shared information and recipes for this publication:

Florence Anderson, pioneer from Pocatello, Idaho

Grace Mills, pioneer from Tensleep, Wyoming

For more information:

1. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Information Bulletin #539. *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, 1994.
2. *Ball Blue Book*, Edition 32, Ball Corporation, Muncie, Indiana.

Contact your local University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service educator for further food preservation information.

**Please note: Home canning guidelines changed significantly in 1988. Canning references prior to 1988 may not be safe.**