



CALENDAR 2008



Sunflower Bud: Photographic Competition Winning Entry—Freda Earl



Snowy Scene



Sunnyside Allotment Society

January 2008



The theme of this year's calendar is preserving and storing our produce, so we can enjoy it throughout the year.

PRESERVING

No vegetable or fruit that you have grown yourself tastes as good as when it is picked and eaten straightaway. But at some times of year you will have a glut and at others not enough.

There is a basic instinct in all of us, going right back to the hunter/gatherers, to store food for the leaner times of the year. The invention of the freezer has enabled us to fulfil this need to a certain extent, and the availability of fruit and vegetables all year round, flown in from around the world, has lessened our need to store. But this might not always be the case.

There are various methods of extending the life of your crops. We have tried to highlight some of the traditional and now less commonly used methods of preserving produce which we thought you might like to try. It can be rewarding and fun. The old preserving methods are very practical and are currently gaining popularity again. They are even becoming 'fashionable'! We have excluded smoking because it requires specialist equipment, but all the other methods can be achieved without vast outlay, mostly using items you will already have in the kitchen.

Most fruit and vegetables have to be preserved if they are to be kept for any length of time. It is important to understand the underlying principles of preserving. It is essential that all agents of spoilage are destroyed or made inactive. This spoilage may be due to one or more of the following factors: enzyme action, yeasts, moulds or bacteria. It is also important that they are prevented from re-entering the preserved food so care must be taken to seal vacuum jars and cans, and cover down jams and chutneys properly. (More details on the back cover.)

Of course some vegetables like parsnips, leeks and Jerusalem artichokes can be left in the ground until required. Others such as carrots and beetroot can be stored in clamps. Potatoes should be stored in paper or hessian sacks in a cool, dark, frost-free place. Onions and garlic can be woven onto strings and hung in a dry airy place. In this way these crops can be made to last through the winter. But others do not store so well without being preserved.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1 New Year's Day	2	3	4	5 Working Party	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22 SAS Committee Meeting	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



Allotment Working Parties





Sunnyside Allotment Society



February 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2 <i>Working Party</i>	3
4	5 <i>Shrove Tuesday</i>	6 <i>Ash Wednesday</i>	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

PICKLING

Pickling prevents ingredients deteriorating by adding sufficient salt, sugar and vinegar to preserve them. This method uses dry salt or brine (salted water) to draw out the excess water which would dilute the vinegar in which the produce is preserved. Pickles are an ideal accompaniment to many meals and are relatively easy to make. Both vegetables and fruit can be used. Store pickles in a cool dark place.

Various vinegars are available for pickling and the kind you choose will depend on the produce to be pickled and your own taste. Red and white wine vinegars are less harsh than malt vinegar; cider vinegar and fruit vinegars go well with fruit pickles.

And you can also spice up your vinegar using the following recipe. For 2 litres of white vinegar you will need ½ oz stick of cinnamon ½ oz mace ½ oz allspice berries ¼ oz peppercorns and ¼ oz whole cloves plus 2-3 bay leaves or couple of peeled garlic cloves. Put the vinegar in a glass bowl which is placed in a saucepan of water. Put the spices in a muslin bag and suspend in the vinegar. Boil the water in the saucepan so the vinegar is simmering. Take off the heat and cover. Allow to stand for about 3 hours. Remove the muslin bag and the spiced vinegar is ready. For fruit pickles this mixture is usually sweetened allowing 1 lb sugar and 1 pint vinegar to 3 lb fruit. This is good for pickled onions and shallots.

Gherkin Pickle

900 ml white wine vinegar	1 blade of mace (optional)
570 ml water	6 tbsp coarse salt
1 tsp dill seeds	10-12 gherkins
2 tsp black peppercorns, crushed	Bunch of fresh dill
	4/5 large garlic cloves

Pour the vinegar and water into a pan. Add the dill seeds, peppercorns, mace and salt. Bring to the boil over high heat and boil hard for 3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let cool. Pack the gherkins into a clean jar adding fresh dill and garlic. Pour the cooled pickling liquid, including the spices, into the jar to fill. Seal the jar. Check the gherkins after a couple of days to ensure they are still covered by the pickling liquid. If they are not, put some crumpled greaseproof paper into the jar to hold the gherkins down. Remove the paper after two weeks. Store in the fridge for one month before eating. The gherkins can be kept in the fridge for up to three months in total.



Painting the Summerhouse



Sunnyside Allotment Society



March 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1 <i>Working Party</i>	2 <i>Mothering Sunday</i>
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 <i>Easter Monday</i>	25 <i>SAS Committee Meeting</i>	26	27	28 <i>Good Friday</i>	29	30 <i>Easter Sunday</i>
31						<i>BST starts</i>

PICKLING (continued)

Piccalilli

2 lb prepared vegetables (eg marrow, cucumber, cauliflower, beans, onions etc)

4 oz salt

2 pints water

4 oz sugar

1 pint vinegar

½ oz plain flour

½ level tbsp mustard

2 level tsp turmeric

1 level tsp ground ginger

Prepare brine, using the salt and water. Dice vegetables into ½ to 1 inch pieces. Place in brine. Cover and leave overnight. Drain vegetables and put them with the sugar and ¾ pint of the vinegar in a saucepan. Bring to the boil and cook for 15 mins. Blend the dry ingredients with remaining vinegar in a bowl. Add the blended mixture to the cooked vegetables. Bring to the boil and cook for 1 minute stirring all the time. Bottle in hot jars and seal with vinegar proof lids.

Beetroot Relish

1 lb raw beetroot

1 red onion, thinly sliced

2 cooking apples, cored and sliced

125 ml red wine vinegar

125 ml malt vinegar

4 tbsp horseradish relish

3 oz light brown sugar

3 oz raisins

Wrap the beetroot in foil and bake in a preheated oven at 180° C/gas mark 4 for 2-3 hours, until soft. Let the beetroot cool, then peel. Meanwhile, put the onion and apples in a pan. Add the red wine vinegar and malt vinegar. Bring to the boil, then simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 20 mins until the onion and the apples are tender. Chop the beetroot and add to the pan along with the horseradish, brown sugar and raisins. Heat gently stirring until the sugar has dissolved, then simmer for about 10 minutes, until the relish has thickened. It will thicken further upon standing. Prepare and fill jars then seal while hot with vinegar proof lids. Store in a cold, dark, dry place for six weeks before using. It will keep for up to 1 year.



Spring View



Sunnyside Allotment Society



April 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

JELLIES

High pectin fruits make the best jellies. Prepare the fruit according to type; there is no need to remove the peel, core and seeds. Put the fruit in the pan with the specified amount of water and simmer gently until the fruit is soft, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon to prevent sticking. Scald the jelly bag. Tie the bag to a stand and put a large bowl underneath. Pour the contents of the pan into the bag and leave it to drip in a cool place, undisturbed, for 8-12 hours until no more liquid is coming through. If you want a clear jelly do not squeeze.

Measure the juice in the bowl and return it to a clean pan. Add 1 lb warmed sugar for every pint of juice. Heat gently, stirring with a wooden spoon, until the sugar has dissolved, then raise the heat and boil rapidly until the temperature reaches 105°C on a sugar thermometer. Alternatively use a setting point test. Avoid stirring unless necessary as it can cause air bubbles. With the pan off the heat, skim any scum from the surface with a slotted spoon. Prepare and fill the jars and seal.

Gooseberry Jelly

4 lb gooseberries 1 litre water
1 lb sugar Elderflower blooms or cordial to taste

Wash the gooseberries and put into a pan with the water. Simmer until a pulp and then strain through the bag. Allow the juice to drip overnight. Add 1 lb sugar to 1 pint of the juice and heat until dissolved. Add some sprigs of elderflower wrapped in a muslin bag at this stage or cordial for flavour. Remove the bag after a few minutes. Boil the liquid fast and until the setting point is reached. Skim the surface before putting into warmed jars, then seal.

Mint Jelly

4 lb tart apples 12 oz fresh mint chopped
1 pint water 1 pint white wine vinegar
Sugar

Combine unpeeled chopped apple with water and mint in a pan. Bring to the boil, reduce heat and cook for 20 mins, till apples are soft. Add vinegar, return to boil. Simmer covered for 5 mins. Blend or mash the apple to the consistency of apple sauce. Strain the pulp overnight. Pour juice into a large pan. Add 1 lb sugar to each pint of liquid. Heat gently, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Bring to the boil. Cook for 10-15 mins. Skim off the surface scum. Continue to boil for 5 mins. Pour into sterilised jars and seal with vinegar proof lids.



Sheds and Greenhouses



Sunnyside Allotment Society



May 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5 May Day	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 SAS Committee Meeting	21	22	23	24	25
26 Whitsun Bank Holiday	27	28	29	30	31	

FRUIT BUTTERS AND CHEESES

Fruit butters and cheeses are both made by cooking fruit puree with sugar until it is thick. Fruit cheeses are cooked until they are so thick that when cold they can be cut with a knife, hence the name 'cheese'. Fruit butters are not cooked for so long so that they are softer, with a butter-like consistency. This method is a useful way of preserving imperfect fruit especially when you have a glut. A large quantity of fruit is required to make a small amount of preserve. Apples, blackberries and plums, especially damsons, can be used.

Cut the fruit into large pieces, removing any blemishes. Put the fruit into a pan and add enough water to cover. First bring to the boil, then simmer until the fruit is very tender. Puree the pulp and put it into a measuring jug to calculate the amount of sugar required. For fruit cheeses allow 1 lb sugar to 1 pint pulp. Fruit butters require ½ lb sugar to 1 pint pulp.

Return the puree to a clean pan. Add the sugar and heat gently, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Simmer very gently, stirring frequently to ensure even cooking. Fruit butter is ready when it has the consistency of thick cream so that it can be spread when cold. Fruit cheese is ready when the spoon drawn across the base of the pan leaves a clear channel. Transfer the butter to warm sterilised jars. For the cheese, brush the sterilised jars with a little vegetable oil and pour in the mixture. Try to use straight-sided jars to enable the cheese to be removed more easily. The cheese stores longer than the butter.

FLAVOURED PUREES

Apple puree is a good way of using up apples and keeping them for later in the year. Freeze in small quantities for use as an accompaniment to pork dishes. As a variation, add sage leaves to the apple as it is cooking. Leave to cool then remove the sage and freeze. Sage has a strong flavour so experiment with the amount added.

Similar purees can be made from redcurrants as an alternative to jelly to accompany meats, and as a variation, add rosemary to flavour the puree. Purees made from blackcurrants, raspberries and other fruits and then frozen provide a useful addition and taste of summer to sweets in the winter. They can also be turned into sorbets and fruit ices.



Children Enjoying the Allotments



Photographic Competition Commended Entry—Chris Locke



Sunnyside Allotment Society

June 2008



Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30					<i>SAS Barbecue</i>	

DRYING

This is one of the oldest methods of preserving food. The liquid is removed in the drying process, but the flavour and goodness isn't. The best flavours are obtained by sun or outdoor drying, (eg sun-dried tomatoes) but our climate is not usually suitable for this.

Beans can be left to mature on the plant until they are dry before being harvested. They should be left on a tray in a warm dry place to ensure that they are completely dry before being stored in an airtight jar. They need to be soaked for a minimum of 12 hrs before using. They are best added to winter casseroles with slow cooking times.

Onions can be air dried as rings. They should be peeled and cut across the vegetable to form rings. Thread onto string and hang in a warm place such as an airing cupboard. They can also be dried in the oven at its lowest setting. Most kinds of **chillies** can be successfully air dried, except the thick walled varieties. For the best results use fully ripened (red) chillies. Thread on string and hang to dry out thoroughly.

The intense flavour of some **herbs** can be preserved for use later in the year by drying. For the best flavour they should be picked in the morning once the dew has dried but before the sun is high, and once the flower buds have formed but before the flowers open. Put a single layer of herbs on a rack and cover. Put the tray in a warm airy place such as the plate warming drawer of the oven, leaving the door open for about 24 hours. When dry the leaves should be brittle but still green. Crumble the leaves onto a sheet of paper and pour into small jars and seal. Store in a dark place.

Another method is to place a single layer of herbs on kitchen paper on a large plate in the **microwave**. Switch to 'defrost' for about 5 mins. If they are not totally dry, give them another minute or two. Store in an airtight container. A simple way of preserving herbs which keeps the colour and flavour is to freeze them in **ice cubes**. Chop the herbs and freeze them in ice cube trays.

The best herbs for drying are rosemary, sage, mint, bay, thyme, marjoram and lovage. **Herbes de Provence** is possibly the most famous mixture of herbs. Mix together dried thyme, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, savory, basil and tarragon. **Bouquet garni** is another popular flavouring. Dry a twig of bay, 4 stalks of thyme, 2 sprigs of rosemary and some parsley together in a paper bag with stems protruding and leave to dry. Put into a muslin bag to use.



Sunnyside Barbecue



Sunnyside Allotment Society



July 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 <i>SAS Committee Meeting</i>	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

DRYING (continued)

When you dry **fruit** the flavours intensify and the natural sugars become more concentrated, so it makes sense to use perfectly ripe specimens. The key to successful drying is that the process should be slow and steady. Too rapid and the fruit will become tough and may split. Too slow and it may rot. It is important that every fruit in a batch is properly dried to prevent one rotting fruit from spoiling the rest. The fruit is ready when it feels leathery and releases no moisture when squeezed. Dried fruits can be eaten as they are and added to breakfast cereals, or re-constituted by soaking them in lukewarm water or wine for about 24 hours.

Dried **plums** are really prunes. You can slice, halve or slit the plums (remove stones) before drying. Whole plums take longer to dry, up to 2 or 3 days. Slices should be ready in 12-24 hours. Because of their high water content, soft fruits take longer to dry than hard ones. It is important to keep the temperature below 70°C, at least for the first hour, to prevent the surfaces from hardening, as this would hinder evaporation.

Recently **sun-dried tomatoes** have become a very popular kitchen ingredient, but our climate is not suitable for this. An alternative is to dry them in the oven.

Oven Dried Tomatoes

2 lb ripe, full-flavoured tomatoes
 2-3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 Several whole crushed garlic cloves
 2 tbsp finely chopped sage
 2 tbsp finely chopped thyme
 Salt and freshly ground pepper
 Olive oil
 Fresh bay leaves, for the jars

Cut the tomatoes in half. If very large, quarter them. Arrange them in a single layer in an ovenproof dish. Mix the chopped garlic with ½ the sage and thyme and scatter over the tomatoes. Season well with salt and pepper and drizzle with olive oil. Place them in a *very* low oven. You don't want to cook them, only dry them. Check them after 8 hours, though they may need up to 24. They are ready when they still have a bit of give, but all the jelly that surrounds the tomato seeds has evaporated. Leave them to cool and pack into glass jars, add the remaining chopped herbs, the bay leaves and the garlic cloves. Then cover with olive oil and seal. They will keep in the fridge for up to 2 months.



Open Day Activities



Sunnyside Allotment Society



August 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Bank Holiday						

JAM

When making jam, the amount of sugar that is added varies according to the sugar content of the fruit. It normally accounts for 60-65% of the weight of the finished jam. The longer the jam is cooked the more water will be needed. Put the sterilised jars and bowl of sugar in a low oven to keep warm. Prepare clean, unblemished fruit according to type. Put the fruit in a pan with the specified amount of water and heat.

Remove the pan from the heat and pour in the warm sugar. Heat, stirring with a wooden spoon, until the sugar has dissolved. A pat of butter can be added after the sugar to reduce the formation of scum. Increase the heat and boil rapidly, without stirring, until the setting point is reached. This should take between 10 and 15 mins. Skim any scum from the surface of the jam using a slotted spoon. Leave the jam to stand for about 10 mins before filling the jars so the fruit is evenly distributed throughout and does not rise to the top of the jars. Fill the jars and then seal.

High Dumpsy Dearie Jam

2 lb cooking apples, peeled, cored and sliced
2 lb pears (as above)
2 oz fresh root ginger,
2 lb plums, halved and stoned
4½ lb sugar
zest and juice of 1 lemon
bruised and tied in a muslin bag

Place all the fruit and ginger in a large pan and add just enough water to cover the base of the pan. Simmer until the fruit is tender about 45 mins. Remove from the heat and add warmed sugar stirring until dissolved. Add the lemon zest and juice. Bring to the boil and cook rapidly until the setting point of the jam is reached. Remove any scum. Pour into sterilised jars, discarding the ginger, and seal.

Low Sugar Raspberry Jam

2 lb fresh raspberries
10 oz sugar
1 tbsp lemon juice

Combine berries and sugar in a pan, cover and bring to a simmer. Skim any scum and discard. If additional pectin is needed add a few redcurrants or apple juice. Add lemon juice and simmer for 5 mins. Remove from the heat and test for setting point. Pour into sterilised jars (ensure they are heat proof) and seal. Place jars into pot of warm water and bring to boil, simmer for 10 mins. This recipe can be used with other berries.



Red Blooms





Sunnyside Allotment Society

September 2008



FLAVOURED VINEGARS AND OILS

Making infusions of oil or vinegar with herbs or vegetables is a simple way of preserving your produce. Flavours from other foods are readily absorbed, and they inhibit the growth of micro-organisms. Due to its acidity vinegar infusions will keep longer than infusions using oil. It is very important to use clean sterilised equipment, and to ensure that the jars are properly sealed. Wash, dry and gently crush herbs before putting them into bottles. Pour in your chosen vinegar to the top and seal. Store in a cool dark dry place and shake gently occasionally. Keep for at least 4 weeks before use. The longer you leave it, the better the flavour. They must be stored in the fridge once opened. Vinegars can be flavoured with such ingredients as garlic and chillies, and oils with basil or rosemary. Lemon and parsley vinegar is made by infusing 1 litre of white wine vinegar with 2 to 3 cloves garlic, 1 lime thinly sliced, 3 tbsp fresh parsley and the pared rind of 2 lemons.

Raspberry Vinegar

1lb raspberries Sugar (for sweetened version)
1 pint white wine vinegar

Cover the fruit with the vinegar in a bowl, cover the bowl with a cloth and leave to stand in a cool place for 4-6 days, stirring each day. Strain off through a jelly bag or filter and pour into sterilised bottles and seal. For the sweetened version add 1 lb sugar to each pint of liquid. Heat gently, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Bring to the boil and boil for 10 mins. Pour into sterilised bottles and seal. Leave to mature for at least 2 weeks before using.

Spiced Pears in Raspberry Vinegar

2 lb firm eating pears, peeled, cored and quartered
1 pint raspberry vinegar (unsweetened)
1 lb sugar 1 tsp whole cloves
1 cinnamon stick 1 tsp allspice berries

Place the pears in a pan and cover with boiling water. Simmer for 5 mins. Drain, saving ½ pint of the cooking water. Mix the sugar, the reserved water and the vinegar in the pan. Heat and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the spices and pears and simmer gently until the pears are translucent – about 20 mins. Drain the pears and place in cooled, sterilised jars. Remove any scum from the liquid and pour the liquid including the spices over the pears to cover. Seal and store. The pears are delicious served as an unusual accompaniment to cold turkey or game pie at Christmas.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 <i>SAS Committee Meeting</i>	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					



Photographic Competition Commended Entry—Andy Dolwin



Sunnyside Allotment Society



October 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

CHUTNEYS

Chutneys are made from a mixture of fruits and vegetables flavoured with sugar, seasonings and spices, and cooked with vinegar. The fruitiness, spiciness and the sweet and sour combination can be varied to suit your own taste. They should be cooked very slowly throughout to give a good smooth texture until nearly all the liquid is evaporated. To test whether it is done, draw a spoon across the bottom of the pan. If the channel left by the spoon does not immediately fill with liquid, the chutney is ready. It should be bottled as soon as it is made, using hot sterilised jars. The jars should be covered with screw lids. If these do not have a waxed interior, use a layer of cling-film to prevent corrosive action by the vinegar. Chutneys are a good way of using gluts; beetroot, red and green tomatoes are excellent ingredients.

Spiced Plum Chutney

1½ lb plums, stoned & quartered
 1 lb chopped onions
 ½ lb chopped cooking apples
 ½ pint red wine vinegar
 ¼ lb sultanas
 ¼ lb soft brown sugar
 1 cinnamon stick

Place all the ingredients in a large pan. Bring to the boil and simmer, uncovered, for about 45 mins, until the chutney is thick and pulpy. Spoon into sterilised jars and seal with vinegar proof lids. Store for 4-6 weeks before use.

Courgette Chutney

1½ lb courgettes, thickly sliced
 Coarse salt for sprinkling
 900ml white wine vinegar
 12 oz light brown sugar
 ½ tbsp chopped fresh ginger
 ½ tbsp crushed black peppercorns

2 chopped onions
 3 chopped cloves garlic
 6oz raisins
 1½ tsp celery salt

Layer the courgettes in a colander, sprinkling the layers with salt. Place on a plate and leave overnight to drain. Rinse the courgettes, drain and dry. Put them into a pan with the onion, garlic, raisins, peppercorns, ginger, celery salt and vinegar. Boil gently for about 15 mins until onions and courgettes are tender. Stir in the sugar until it has dissolved, then simmer steadily until the mixture is thick. Stir frequently to prevent sticking. Fill the jars, seal and keep in a cool, dark, dry place for at least one month before eating.



Water Pipe Project



Sunnyside Allotment Society



November 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 <i>SAS Committee Meeting</i>	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29 <i>SAS AGM</i>	30

BOTTLED FRUIT

Bottling preserves by heat, which kills yeasts, moulds and micro-organisms and creates a vacuum to seal in the fruit. Only fruits (including tomatoes) which are acidic can be safely bottled using this method. Prepare fruit and cook if necessary. Rinse before packing. Prick gooseberry skins to prevent shrivelling. Soak rhubarb and strawberries in a sugar syrup for 12 hours. Pack the fruit, cooked or raw, as closely as possible without crushing it, up to 1 inch from the tops of sterilised jars.

Make a sugar syrup by gently heating the sugar and any flavourings being used the water until the sugar is dissolved. To make a light syrup use 4 oz sugar for every 1 pint water. Pour the liquid over the fruit leaving about half an inch of headspace. Seal the jars. Process the jars in a water bath. Place a rack or a wad of folded newspaper in the bottom of a large saucepan. Stand the jars on the bottling rack and wedge cloths or newspaper in between the jars to prevent rattling and cracking. Cover the jars with warm water. Heat the water to the simmering point (88°C) and maintain a steady simmer for 10 mins. Leave the jars to cool and then test the seals.

Raspberry Syrup

3lb raspberries
Juice 2 lemons

Put the raspberries in a heatproof bowl and place the over a saucepan of simmering water. Heat the raspberries, stirring occasionally, until warmed and the juices begin to run. Pour through a nylon sieve lined with a double thickness of muslin and press gently with a wooden spoon to extract as much juice as possible. For every 1 pint juice add ½ lb sugar. Heat gently, stirring, until the sugar has dissolved. Add the lemon juice and leave to cool for 5 mins. Pour the syrup into sterilised bottles to within ½ inch of the top. Heat-process in a water bath. Store in a cool, dark, dry place for up to six months.

FLAVOURED ALCOHOLS

Flavoured alcohol needs to be matured over several months. Sloe gin is a favourite. Sloes grow wild along many paths and hedgerows locally. Sloes impart a wonderful, warming fruitiness and colour to gin or vodka. Tradition has it that the best time to pick sloes is after the first frost of autumn has swollen and softened them slightly. When the gin is ready the sloes can be used to make liqueur chocolates.



Water Pipe Project



Sunnyside Allotment Society



December 2008

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Xmas Drinks

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

Boxing Day

CANDIED, CRYSTALLISED OR GLACÉ FRUIT

Candied (crystallised and glacé) fruit has been around since at least the 14th century. Whole fruit or pieces of fruit can be preserved in this manner. Basically, the method is to gently cook the barely ripe fruit in increasingly stronger solutions of heated sugar syrup. The fruit is usually boiled in the syrup, and then left to soak for anywhere from four to fourteen days. During the candying process, the naturally occurring water in the fruit is replaced by sugar, resulting in fruits with firm textures, sweet flavours and extended keeping properties. Fruits that are already firm, such as pineapple, apricots, cherries, and apples are best for candying. Soft fruits, such as most berries, will not survive the extended soaking process.

Prepare the fruit by pricking plums, apricots etc all over; remove the stones from cherries using a cherry stoner; peel citrus fruits and divide into segments, removing all the pith and skin; peel, cut in half and thickly slice pears and apples. The fruit is first poached in water, then sugar is added to the mixture. During the prolonged soaking period, the sugar syrup is gradually concentrated by adding more sugar periodically. Finally, the candied fruit is left to dry outside of the syrup for several days. It can be finished by being crystallised or glacé, or can be used as is for dipping in chocolate or incorporated in other recipes.

Crystallised Fruit

Fill a small bowl with caster sugar and bring a saucepan of water to the boil. Take each piece of dry candied fruit and dip it onto the boiling water using a skewer or tongs. Allow any excess moisture to drain off, then roll the fruit in the sugar. Transfer to a foil-lined tray and leave to dry. Using tongs pack the fruit into containers, placing baking parchment between each layer.

Glacé Fruit

For each 1 lb of candied fruit use 1 lb sugar and ¼ pint of water. Dissolve the sugar in water and then boil for one min then pour a little of the hot syrup into a warmed small bowl. Keep this hot over a saucepan of boiling water. Boil another pan of water. Dip each piece of fruit into the boiling water for 20 seconds, then dip into the bowl of syrup. Place on a wire rack placed over a tray. As the syrup becomes cloudy, discard it and add fresh syrup. Cover the rack with a dome of foil. Leave the fruit to dry in warm place for 2-3 days, turning a few times. Then pack as above.



PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PRESERVING

Hygiene is particularly important. Bottles and jars need to be checked for cracks, then thoroughly washed. Sterilise by placing a pre-heated oven 160°C or Gas Mark 3 for 10 mins until dry. Jars may be sealed either by using a wax disk with a cellophane cover, or a twist top lid on its own. Lids need to be sterilised by scalding in boiling water. For recipes involving vinegar use a twist top lid lined with plastic. Once opened preserves should be kept in the fridge. **Oil** is not strictly a preservative, but will protect ingredients, which must be pre-treated, for a short time. Make in small quantities and use quickly, to prevent it going rancid.

Jams and Jellies: Usually the fruit is cooked slowly before adding the warmed sugar, then boiled rapidly to achieve a setting point. This depends upon the right combination of pectin, acid and sugar. Best results are obtained using just ripe or under-ripe fruit which has more pectin. With low-pectin fruits add an apple or a few redcurrants. For increased acidity add lemon or apple juice, which helps extract the pectin from the fruit. Sugar is not just to add sweetness, but to preserve.

Testing for Setting Point: This is reached at 105°C if you have a jam thermometer. Other methods include the cold plate test. Chill a plate, put a teaspoon of the liquid on the plate and cool for 1 min. Then push the liquid with your finger; if the surface wrinkles then a set is reached. Alternatively dip a spoon into the jam, hold above the pan to cool slightly; if drops combine together and fall off slowly it is ready.

Preserving Equipment is available through local kitchen shops and chains such as Lakeland who also have a mail order and internet service (www.lakeland.co.uk) and Wares of Knutsford (www.waresofknutsford.co.uk).



All the photographs in this calendar have been taken by Sunnyside Allotment Society members and several were entries in the Photographic Competition. Thanks to all who have contributed photos.

If you feel tempted to take on an allotment, tenancy forms are available from the Chairman of Sunnyside Allotment Society, or from the tea hut on B15. Alternatively phone Berkhamsted Town Council on 01442 228945.

To find out more about Sunnyside Allotment Society, visit our website: www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk