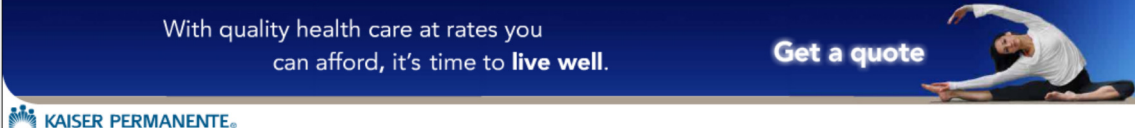


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Jam sessions

More people putting a lid on it and making their own preserves

By Caron Golden

October 15, 2008

On any given Sunday at the Hillcrest farmers market, you'll probably find Sue Heim scouting the fruit stalls for juicy, ripe possibilities that she can use for her weekly jam-making date with a friend.

After a long hiatus from making preserves, Heim got into it again five years ago. "We've gone nuts this year," she says. "We make all kinds of jams based on what's at the farmers market. I buy whatever is fresh and go to her house, where she has the equipment. It's a girl get-together thing."



NELVIN CEPEDA / Union-Tribune

Heim's weekend ritual of jam-making reflects a growing interest in preserves.

That interest was evident at Slow Food Nation, a gathering in San Francisco over the Labor Day Weekend that celebrated local, seasonal, artisan foods.

Casey Havre, owner of Loulou's Garden, a small company in Escalon (near Stockton) that makes jams, preserves and pickles, was curator of the Honey and Preserves Food Pavilion at Slow Food Nation. Havre likened the increase in the number of people making their own preserves to the knitting craze that struck young women several years ago.

"I think it has to do with this whole push of knowing where your food comes from, wanting to buy locally and going to farmers markets," she

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says. < P> “So many people are looking for community, especially in urban neighborhoods where they might not know their neighbors. With farmers markets, you get to know the people who sell you your produce, and you see your neighbors. You buy this beautiful fruit and want to do something creative with it.”

June Taylor, whose June Taylor Jams are a Bay Area favorite, was one of the artisans featured at the Slow Food Nation pavilion. Deeply committed to her work, she operates on a small scale, making 150 jars a day using organic produce and her own homemade pectin.

She also teaches others to make jam in her Berkeley kitchen. Taylor reports an upswing in people wanting to take her classes.

“I see a hunger for a return to something else that's more connected and meaningful,” she says. “More people are doing it because it's not a high investment of equipment, and we have a memory of homemade preserves from the past. We have the bounty of great fruit in California. I say to students, 'Take this back. It's not hard to do.’”

Jackie Anderson, owner of Jackie's Jams in San Diego, agrees. The former social worker launched her business four years ago with Robert Shay. They're a fixture at local farmers markets. Anderson's preserves are also sold at Whole Foods. She does co-packing for farmers who have excess fruit and also makes preserves under private labels for businesses such as Mrs. Trimmer's Restaurant in Old Town.

“I encourage people to experiment and use what's in their back yard,” Anderson says. “Making preserves is like creating a jar of memory from childhood.”

Locally, Great News! Discount Cookware in Pacific Beach has seen an uptick in sales of canning kits and supplies, particularly in August.

“There was a run on them,” says Erick D'Eugenio, one of



NELVIN CEPEDA / Union-Tribune
Jackie Anderson makes artusan jams in Kearny Mesa and sells them at farmers markets.

Learning the lingo

What's the difference between jelly and jam? Marmalade and preserves? Here are some basics:

Jelly is made from fruit juice, along with sugar and sometimes pectin.

Jam is a thick puree of fruit and sugar.

Preserves take it a step further with large chunks of fruit or whole fruit.

A **conserve** usually contains more than one kind of fruit and maybe even nuts.

Marmalade is like a preserve, only it also has fruit rind, usually from citrus.

Fruit spreads are usually made with fruit-juice concentrates or low-calorie sweeteners.

Fruit butters are spreads made by cooking fresh fruit with spices until thick and smooth.

That's not the limit, though. Ardent jam-makers love to add fresh herbs, edible flowers, spices and liqueurs to their creations.

- CARON GOLDEN

Resources

U.S. Department of Agriculture Guide to Home Canning:
foodsafety.psu.edu/canningguide.html

Jackie's Jams: Jackiesjams.com

June Taylor Jams:
junetaylorjams.com

Loulou's Garden: loulousgarden.com

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the store's retail managers. " ... I had someone come in who was making grape jam from his grapes."

Safe preserving

Contrary to what some would-be jam makers worry about, it's pretty safe to preserve fruit.

"The only way you can hurt someone with a jar of jam is if you throw it at them," says Taylor. "We're not in botulism territory with preserves."

That's because the acidity in most fruit preserves prevents the growth of botulism. However, it's still important to follow your recipe and jar manufacturer's instructions carefully.

The basic technique is straightforward, although different fruits call for some variance. Prepare your fruit, wash your jars and lids, place your fruit mixture into a large, heavy pot, along with lemon juice, if you need some acid to balance flavors, and sugar. If the recipe calls for pectin, add that. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce to a simmer – all the while stirring – until the mixture reaches the right consistency or temperature, depending on the recipe.

Immediately pour the mixture into impeccably clean jars and seal in a boiling water bath, following the jar manufacturer's directions or the directions in your recipe.

Anderson recommends boiling the jars for about seven minutes. "You don't want to do it too long or it starts cooking again," she notes.

The best preserves have the right consistency and the right balance of flavors. "You have to taste the fruit and evaluate to decide how much sugar you need," says Taylor. "A Seville orange needs a lot of sugar. A white peach doesn't."

Anderson emphasizes that she uses as little sugar as possible. "Good fruit already has a high sugar content and its own pectin," she says. "But we do add good cane sugar as needed."

For Heim, who even makes 4-ounce jars of jam to take with her on business trips, making preserves is simply fun and satisfying: "It can't get any fresher than when you have bought the fruit in the farmers market, and two hours later it's in a pot for jam."

She's looking forward to gift-giving at Christmas. Basil jelly, made with basil from her friend's garden, already is in small jars with holiday lids, as is tomato jam.

"We'll have green and red jars of jam to give," she says. "It's my jam, and I enjoy it."

Crab Apple Sage Jelly

Makes about 4 (8-ounce) jars

3 1/2 pound crab apples (or substitute regular apples)

4 1/2 cups sugar

Juice of 1 lemon

20 fresh sage leaves, washed and dried (divided use) e)

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Wash the crab apples in cold water, remove the stems and halve the crab apples. Place the pieces in a heavy pot and add 7 cups water. Bring to a boil then reduce to a simmer. Cook for about 30 to 40 minutes, or until the crab apples are soft.

Pour the crab apples and water through a fine sieve into a bowl, pressing on the fruit with a wooden spoon without forcing the fruit through. Wash the sieve and line with cheesecloth. Pour the juice through again, this time letting the juice drain on its own. (Overnight is fine.)

Into the heavy pot, measure 4 cups of the juice and add sugar and lemon juice. Wrap 12 sage leaves in cheesecloth and add to the pot. Bring to a boil. Once the mixture reaches 222 degrees on a candy thermometer, hold it there for 8 to 10 minutes, checking for gel set – when a drop of jelly placed on a cold plate wrinkles when pushed.

Once jelly is set, remove the sage leaves and pour the mixture into clean, hot jars. Add one sage leaf to each jar and seal in a hot-water bath according to jar manufacturer's instructions.

(From Casey Havre, loulousgarden.com.)

Orange Marmalade

Makes about 4 (8-ounce) jars

12 navel oranges (to yield 4 cups juice), or other citrus such as Meyer lemons or grapefruit

3 cups sugar, plus more to taste

Chinese five-spice powder, cinnamon or cloves, to taste, optional

2 tablespoons lemon juice

Pinch of salt

Wash oranges in hot water to remove any wax. Juice the oranges (use a strainer to remove pulp and seeds), keeping the rinds/peels. Twelve oranges should yield 4 cups of juice. If the amount of juice falls short, add either lemon juice or water to make up the difference. Set juice aside.

Scrape out 6 to 8 of the juiced orange halves, throwing out any remaining orange sections. Don't worry about removing the pith (the white part inside the peel). Cut the peels into long, 1/4-inch-wide strips. Place the strips in a wide-bottomed, stainless-steel or copper saucepan, cover with water and bring to a boil; reduce heat to an energetic simmer and let boil for 10 minutes to remove the bitterness and soften the peel. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve, then rinse the peels in cold running water.

Return the peels to the pot. Add the sugar and spices, if using, mix well and put the pot back onto the stove at medium-low heat, and let cook for 15 minutes, or until the peels have the texture of al dente pasta. Stir occasionally. Taste and adjust for sweetness.

Pour in the reserved 4 cups juice, 2 cups water and lemon juice. Mixture will soon begin to boil. Let it cook until the liquid is reduced by one-third. Stir frequently.

Run a spoon along the bottom of the pot. If the jam holds along the sides (think: parting of the Red Sea) and you can see the bottom of the pot for a few seconds after the spoon is gone, then it's just about done. Once the jam starts to thicken, add a pinch of salt and cook a minute or two longer.

Pour into jars sterilized according to manufacturer's instructions and store in the refrigerator for up to four weeks. For longer storage, process in a hot-water bath according to manufacturer's instructions.

(From Carolina Braunschweig of Cmb sweets in the San Francisco Chronicle.)

Honey Plum Spareribs

6 servings

3 to 4 pounds pork spareribs

1/2 cup soy sauce

1/4 cup A-1 steak sauce

1/2 cup honey

1/2 cup plum jam, such as Jackie's Plum Jam

1/4 cup orange juice

3 to 4 cloves garlic, minced

Cut ribs into serving pieces. Place in a shallow, foil-lined pan with the meaty side down. Cover tightly with additional foil and bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, combine soy sauce, steak sauce, honey, jam, orange juice and garlic. Remove foil and drain off drippings. Brush both sides of ribs thoroughly with sauce; pour most of remaining sauce evenly over ribs. Return to oven and bake 30 minutes, uncovered, brushing ribs with reserved sauce every 10 minutes.

(From "Jackie's Jams Cookbook" by Jackie Anderson, jackiesjams.com)

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