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Go green this summer

BEING a gooseberry is not such a bad thing. The little green fruits on their prickly bushes are now ripe for picking but be quick because the gooseberry only has a short season.

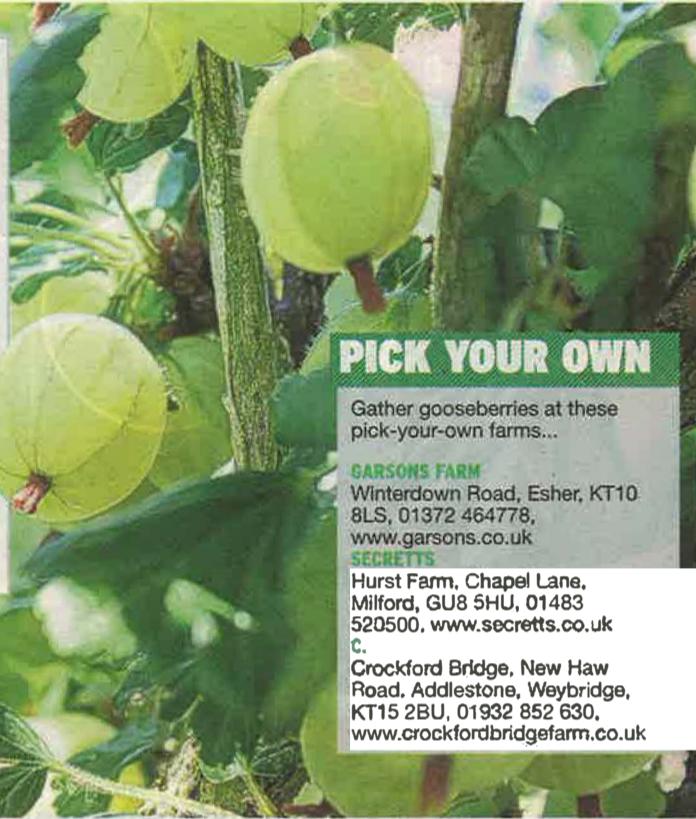
A source of vitamin C and antioxidants and known for their sharp taste, you can buy them in shops, pick your own at farms or even cultivate a bush yourself.

Garsons Pick Your Own Farm up the road in Esher uses the variety Invicta, which harvest during the

month of June and are expected to continue until mid-July – check the website for availability, www.garsons.co.uk

Klara Klimova of Garsons says: "This wonderful early-season fruit can be eaten raw, but more often used in pies and puddings when cooked."

"Jams, fruit pickles and other deserts are favoured by the more traditional cooks – but more recently we see gooseberries used to flavour drinks like sparkling water."



PICK YOUR OWN

Gather gooseberries at these pick-your-own farms...

GARSONS FARM
Winterdown Road, Esher, KT10 8LS, 01372 464778, www.garsons.co.uk
SECRETS
Hurst Farm, Chapel Lane, Milford, GU8 5HU, 01483 520500, www.secretts.co.uk
Crockford Bridge, New Haw Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, KT15 2BU, 01932 852 630, www.crockfordbridgefarm.co.uk

RECIPE

FOOD writer and photographer Shirlee Posner offers a recipe for gooseberries



GOOSEBERRY, RHUBARB AND ELDERFLOWER JAM

I relish making small batches of preserves when I have ripe fruit in the garden. Jam-making this way is easy, stress-free, and an incredibly satisfying hour of creativity.

We were down to the last jar of marmalade so it was time to act and I had the perfect solution. My gooseberry bushes were re-sited this year and I thought the trauma would kill the yield. In fact they actually seemed to relish being in their new home and a bumper crop is ready to pick.

Right next to the gooseberries the rhubarb was also ready to cut so I decided to combine three early summer flavours in my first jam of the new season. Here it is; it's heady with the aroma of elderflowers, tart from the gooseberries and with a pink glow from the rhubarb. I saved handfuls of gooseberries and rhubarb to chuck into the last five minutes of cooking to add a little chunkiness but if you prefer a smoother finish put all the fruit in at the same time.

I give amounts here and use the classic ratio of the same weight in sugar as the fruit. That means there is no pressure on how much you make and it always works. I use jam sugar that has pectin added but actually gooseberries have their own but as I was adding other fruit it helps. If you want a lower sugar jam, use 50g sugar to every 100g fruit. It will be a little runnier and you must keep it in the fridge and use it up in three weeks.

Before you start cooking just heat the oven to 100C. Take an oven proof dish and put around 2cm of water in the bottom. Place your jam jars in the

tray and leave in the oven to sterilise while you make the jam. Lids can be placed in a mixing bowl and covered with boiling water from the kettle.

INGREDIENTS:
250g gooseberries, topped and tailed (you can do this with scissors)
150g rhubarb, cut into 1 cm chunks
200ml clear apple juice or water
3-4 heads of elderflowers (optional)
400g jam sugar
4 tablespoons elderflower cordial

Place the fruit and juice in a medium size heavy based saucepan. Lay the elderflowers on top and allow to infuse, while you bring the mixture to the boil. As soon as it boils turn off the heat and leave for 10 minutes. Remove and discard the elderflowers and add the sugar to the pan. Bring to the boil for 10-15 minutes or until the mixture has thickened and looks syrupy then stir in the elderflower cordial. If you have a jam thermometer handy you are looking for 105C. I never use one and don't regret it! Allow the jam to cool for 10 minutes before pouring the jam into the jars.

I use this on fresh banana scones, for laying cakes and of course on toast.

Shirlee Posner is a food writer, photographer and stylist who writes local food blog www.eatsurrey.co.uk you'll find her on twitter @eatsurrey and facebook. In her other life she teaches Aspects of Food and Food Innovation at Surrey University and provides PR for small artisan food producers.

Get a taste of history...

GOOSEBERRIES have long been a favourite with home cooks, as Tracy Carroll of Nutfield-based website Local Food Britain's found out when she visited Surrey History Centre in Woking.

There she discovered a book called Book of Recipes, potions and household hints, 1828-1870, which contains recipes for gooseberry vinegar and gooseberry wine.

Sussex History Centre shares this recipe with us. If you are ambitious enough to have a go, be warned – it makes nine gallons of wine – enough for 50 bottles.

36.37 litres] of full grown unripe Gooseberries.

Bruise them and add five gallons of cold water, after macerating [soaking] for an hour strain the fruit through a sieve, then add 28 pounds of Lump Sugar and when dissolved add sufficient water to make up the nine gallons, pour it into the cask, carry on filling it up every day with water. When it has ceased working add a pint of brandy and suspend half an ounce of Isinglass [the material they add to wine to get rid of the sediment] from the bung hole.

Bring it down and the following March bottle it.

Surrey History Centre holds the written history of the county. Entry is free and expert staff are on hand to assist your research into your family, house, town, organisation or community.

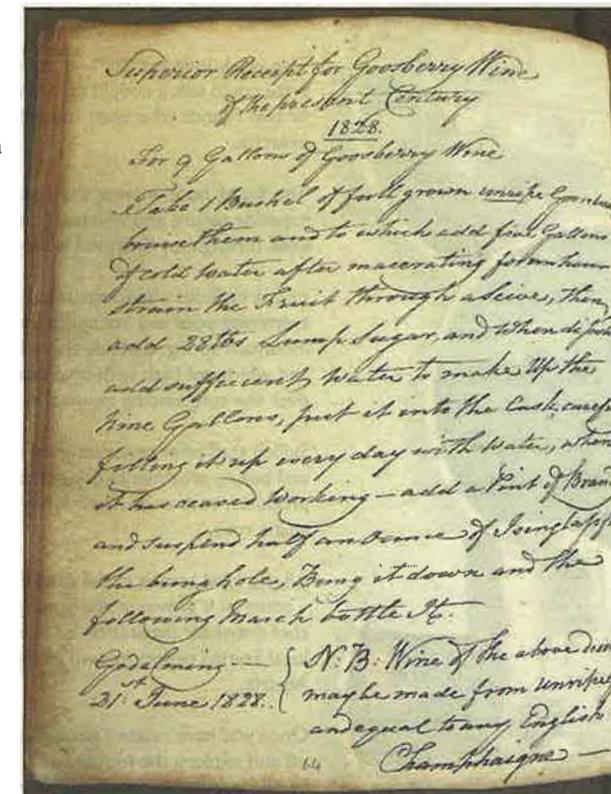
OPEN TUESDAY TO SATURDAY.

Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 6ND, telephone 01483 518737, visit www.exploring.surreyspast.org.uk

Take one bushel [one bushel is eight gallons or approximately

Growmore should be applied in March and watered in. They also crop better with a mulch of well rotted manure. They will grow equally well in full sun and partial shade.

"Pruning is essential, cutting back side shoots to avoid overcrowding the centre of the bush. This is best done



in the winter from November onwards.

"Always water thoroughly throughout the summer and protect the crop from birds with netting."

"Varieties to try include Hinnomaki Green or Hinnomaki Red or another classic favourite, Invicta. They

are very hardy mid season varieties which can be ready to pick from late May although berries will be sweeter if left until July before picking."

"They are all disease and mildew resistant and self fertile. If you're looking for a variety without spines try Pax."

Rob Carter, plant area manager at Knights Garden Centre in Betchworth, says: "Gooseberries have an unusual sharp taste but can make an excellent dessert in a pie or crumble."

"Once planted they require regular feeding and mulching. A general fertiliser such as

Grow your own gooseberries in your garden