

Food & Drink

'Batch Party' is fun and fruitful

From cookie exchange to pot-luck suppers, people have long come together to celebrate special occasions and to enjoy good times.

This year's popular trend is the Batch Party. It's a terrific idea which teams good friends with their favorite recipes for jellies, jams, chutneys and relishes. The stars of the party can be any kind of fruit, in this case luscious blueberries and raspberries, and Certo Pectin products.

Novice and experienced preservers can make a variety of preserves to enjoy now and all winter long.

Here are some guidelines to ensure the success of your first Batch Party.

- Decide on recipes beforehand.
- Make a list of all ingredients and other equipment needed.
- Make the host responsible for all essential equipment, i.e., measuring cups, jars, lids, utensils, etc.
- Designate one person to bring the ripe berries.
- Put another friend in charge of bringing Certo Liquid or Certo Crystals, sugar, lemon juice, etc.
- Follow the "Certo" guidelines for making foolproof preserves.

What a joy it is to savor the aroma of homemade preserves in the kitchen. Imagine sharing the experience with your best friends... and enjoying the fruits of your labor. Call it a Jam Session... call it what you will. Your batch party will be fun and fruitful.

The delectable blueberry is a truly

delicious and simple fruit. This versatile fruit can be used in a wide variety of menu items: cheesecakes, pancakes, drinks, muffins, and much more — not to mention preserves.

And now's the perfect time to pick or buy fresh Ontario blueberries and raspberries.

Late July marks the beginning of the blueberry season in Durham and York Region. The season lasts throughout the month of August and into early September.

Whether picking your own blueberries or purchasing them ready-picked, the berries should be plump, dry, firm and free of stems and leaves, advises the Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association.

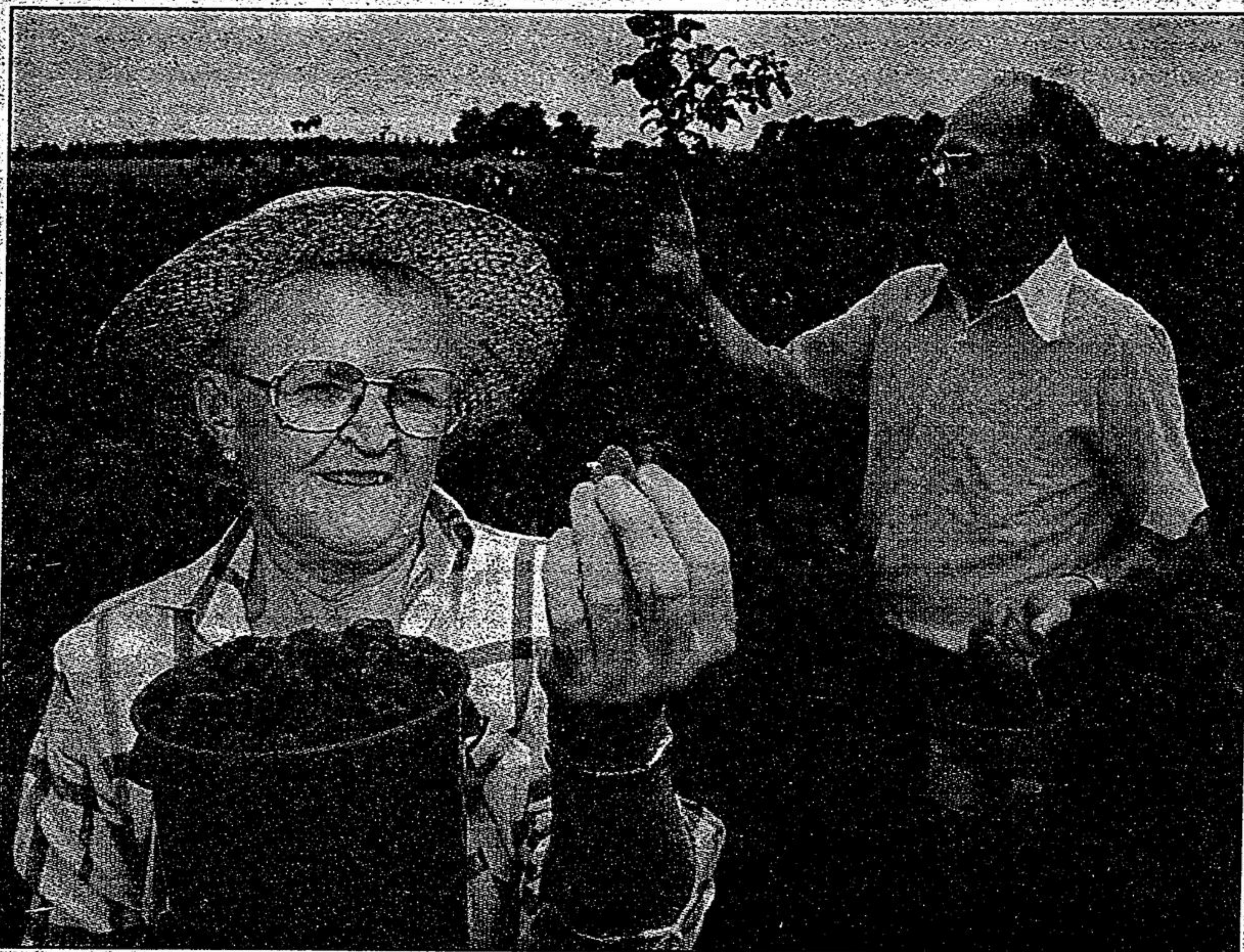
The blueberries should be clean and of even color and size.

Blueberries are best stored in a shallow and well-ventilated container and placed in the refrigerator. They will keep in the fridge for up to two weeks if stored this way.

If you wish to enjoy the taste of blueberries all year long, you can freeze them. Place them on a flat baking sheet in a single layer. Place in the freezer until frozen, then transfer them into freezer bags and return them to the freezer.

In Ontario, raspberries grow in single-crops during July, or fall-bearing varieties produce berries in mid-August through to early September.

To locate berry growers or country markets nearest you, look in the yellow



FABULOUS FRUIT: Ruth and Vince Flood know berries. Raised on farms, they inspect the raspberries at Whittamores Berry Farms on 11th Concession and Steeles. Raspberries and blueberries are ripe for the picking right now at local farms.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

RECIPES

WILD BLUEBERRY PRESERVES

- Prep time: 10 mins
- Cooking time: 15 mins
- 5 1/2 (1250 mL) cups prepared fruit (purchase 1 1/2 qt. or 1.5L of ripe blueberries)
- 1/2 (125 mL) cup water
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) lemon juice
- 7 cups (1500 mL) sugar
- 2 pouches Certo Liquid Fruit Pectin

Wash and remove any stems from blueberries; leave whole. Measure prepared fruit into large saucepan. Add water and lemon juice. Let stand 10 minutes.

Add sugar to fruit and mix well. Place saucepan over high heat. Bring to a full rolling boil and boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.

Immediately stir in Certo Liquid Fruit Pectin.

Stir and skim for 5 minutes to prevent foaming fruit.

Pour quickly into warm, sterilized jars, filling up to 1/4 inch (0.5 cm) from rim.

Seal while hot with sterilized 2-piece lids with new centres.

Makes 8 cups (2L).

RASPBERRY AND BLUEBERRY GRUNT

Fresh Ontario raspberries and blueberries are combined to make this classic Canadian dessert. Later, make them from that precious cache of pickles in your own freezer.

- 1 cup (250 mL) raspberries
- 1 cup (250 mL) blueberries
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) plain yogurt
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) butter, melted

- 2 tsp (10 mL) cornstarch
- Dumplings
- 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) fresh bread crumbs
- 3/4 cup (175 mL) all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp (7 mL) baking powder
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) baking soda
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) plain yogurt
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) butter, melted

Select 1/2 cup (125 mL) each of plumpest blueberries and raspberries. Spread in single layer on plate and sprinkle with 1 tbsp (15 mL) of the sugar; set aside. In Dutch oven or wide saucepan, mix remaining sugar with cornstarch. Gently mix in remaining berries.

Cover and cook over low heat until juices start to flow. Bring to simmer, stirring gently until sauce thickens. Cover and keep warm.

Dumplings

In bowl, combine bread crumbs, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, nutmeg and salt, mixing well. Beat together yogurt, egg and butter. With fork, stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. With floured hands, shape into 6 dumplings.

Bring sauce to a gentle simmer. Add dumplings, keeping them about 2 cm (5/8 in) apart. Cover and cook for 15 to 20 min. or until steam rises steadily. Dumplings come out clean.

Serve sauce and dumplings into serving bowls. Sprinkle with berries. Or top sauce.

low pages of your phone book.

MAKING DELICIOUS JAMS AND JELLIES

Following these 10 quick and simple tips before embarking on a jam-making venture will help ensure perfect results all the time.

Even if you've never made jam before, you can impress family and friends with your jam-making prowess.

Follow recipe directions carefully. Begin by reading recipe thoroughly to make sure all the necessary equipment and ingredients are on hand. Follow recipes step by step.

Check the expiry date on Certo package. Outdated products may cause jam to not set properly.

Pick fruit carefully. Using under or

overripe fruit impacts the flavor and way a recipe sets.

Use the specific Certo pectin products recommended. Be sure to use the pectin product (Liquid, Regular Crystals, Light Crystals) specified in the recipe to ensure the proper set of your jams and jellies.

Use regular granulated sugar. Sugar substitutes and sugar blends with dextrose, fructose and other sweeteners can spoil recipes which were tested with granulated sugar.

Avoid reducing the sugar in recipes. Sugar acts as a preservative, not just a sweetener. It also inhibits mold growth and gives jam a brighter color. There are Certo Light recipes or No Sugar recipes using Certo Regular or Light Crystals for jams

and reduced sugar contents.

Avoid doubling recipes. This can result in the mixture not setting.

Fill and seal jars correctly. Immediately fill cooked jams and jellies to within a 1/4 inch from the top and freezer jams to no more than 1/2 inch from the top to allow for expansion.

For more tips, or ideas, call the Certo hotline at 1-800-268-6038 Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays during August.

Kids, don't forget to send us your favorite recipes for snacks or quick meals for publication on this page in September. Mail it by Aug. 25 to 'Kids Recipes', 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, L3P 1M3 or fax them to 294-1538.

Breakfast IS most important meal

Studies have proven it — everyone needs to start their day with a complete breakfast.

People who miss the most important meal of the day tend to suffer from a number of problems.

Teachers have observed that their students are inattentive, have poor memorization skills and on the whole — learn poorly, said Susan Oram, a clinical dietitian from Markham Stouffville Hospital.

"It's hard to learn and feel good (with) an empty tummy."

But children learn by doing and if their parents aren't eating breakfast, chances they won't either, she said.

If parents can't be home for breakfast, they should make it as convenient as possible for their children.

Children will be more inclined to eat breakfast if the cereal is in the bowl and the juice is in the glass, said Oram.

Breakfast is just as important for adults.

Some researchers have found that serious accidents occur between 10 a.m. and noon by workers who skip

breakfast (and often dinner the night before), said Oram.

That's because employees who do physical work without eating are prone to fatigue, low blood sugar and low hydration.

While everyone should eat a complete breakfast (three of the four food groups), having a glass of juice and a piece of fruit is better than nothing at all.

"Starting the day with something is better than nothing," said Oram.

But people don't have to stick to the traditional breakfast foods like cereal and bacon and eggs; they can have a sandwich, pizza, spaghetti, rice and even fish.

"If it is good food at lunch, it is good food at breakfast."



Food for Thought

Lisa Cartwright