

FOOD

Sunday, July 28, 2013

C8

Summer on the shelf

BY LAURA HUNT ANGEL
FOR THE MESSENGER

You don't have to be a dedicated homesteader to put up a few jars of specialty items that can be enjoyed in the colder months to come. Either of these recipes would also make great gifts for housewarmings, holidays or family gatherings. If you really don't do any canning and don't wish to start now, clip these anyway and give them to someone who loves you; maybe they will give a jar to you as a gift!

Don't forget, Madisonville's Farm Market Appreciation Day is Wednesday, and would be a great place to pick up the main ingredients for a small canning project. In addition to fresh produce, chefs will be on hand preparing dishes using local ingredients. This event will be held indoors at the Ballard Center, 10 a.m. to 3p.m.

They Remember Mama

Several area gardeners have mentioned that their tomatoes are coming in later than usual because of this year's cold spring. The late start will likely result in a lot of green tomatoes this year. When I looked into some flavorful ways to use them, I learned of an old recipe for green tomato ketchup that two Madisonville sisters revived a few years ago. It's similar to piccalilli relish, but with different seasonings, and the fairly large yield will make good use of a surplus "green" harvest.

One summer day a while ago, sisters Sally Barnett and Betty Hewlett, were feeling nostalgic. Their conversation turned to some of their mother, Isabelle Lacey Whitfield's, favorite canning recipes, and they wished that they'd gotten some of those recipes back when they had the chance. Not to be deterred, the two decided to do some experimenting and try to reconstruct their mother's recipe for something that she called Green Tomato Ketchup. Sally remembers her mother serving it up with a bowl of beans and a big hunk of cornbread.

After a preliminary recollection of the ingredients, the sisters gathered up the necessary equipment and started working out the recipe. They ground up the vegetables and added a few of the things they were sure their mother had also added. After a while they tasted their concoction, added more of this or that, and continued the process of stirring, cooking, tasting and adding until they achieved the flavor and consistency that they remembered from their childhood.

One whole day and one ruined stovetop later, Isabelle's girls had created a childhood memory — 12 pints of it, in fact. It would be a great addition to most meat dishes, added to mayo for a mild tartar sauce, or mixed with mustard for hot dogs or sandwiches.

Mother's Green Tomato Ketchup

The first ketchups were made with almost anything except tomatoes - oysters, walnuts, mushrooms and even fruit. Tomato-based ketchups came into use in the late 1700s.

12 cups green tomatoes
4 cups cabbage
1 green bell pepper
1 red bell pepper
4 cups onions
1 hot pepper (jalapeno)
1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
3 cups vinegar
1 1/2 cups water
2 cups sugar
3 tablespoons salt

Grind the vegetables and put in a large kettle or divide evenly between two kettles. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes to one hour, stirring as needed. Fill sterilized hot pint jars, seal and water bath for 15 minutes. Makes 12 pints.

Cinnamon, Spice And Everything Nice

Our good friend, Pat Lovan,



Crockpot apple butter practically makes itself.

Photo Provided



Green tomato ketchup gives a flavor boost to roast pork.

Laura Hunt Angel, For The Messenger

unknowingly triggered some happy childhood memories the other day when she generously gifted us with a sack of June Apples, picked from a tree growing on her hilltop property in Mortons Gap. Chuck stowed the apples in the back seat of the truck and within minutes the hot, humid air took on their sweet perfume.

Pat doesn't have a lot of spare time for gathering or cooking apples; she runs a busy dog grooming and kennel business on that hilltop, too. In addition to her canine guests, Pat shares her house with two cats, a sheltie, a charpai, and a boisterous half beagle/half Jack Russell. Outside are more four footed friends: an enormous half golden lab/half hound dog and two rowdy Aussie brothers. Oh, there's also a small herd of cute little donkeys, whom she warns are sometimes quite mean.

Along with the apples, Pat shared her recipe for apple butter that can literally be made while you sleep, or in Pat's case, while she bathes, trims and otherwise pampers her guests. That's because this is a crockpot recipe that she was given a few years ago by her best friend, Janetta Jessup, who in turn, got the recipe from her mother, Janette Sullinger.

Once home, I took Pat Lovan's gift and made a small batch

crockpot apple butter. All through the night the kitchen smelled of apples and cinnamon, reminding me of the small orchard my folks started before I was born and of a "volunteer" that delighted us all.

One year, we discovered that a new tree had come up on its own along the creek bank. Dad took a sample of it to some experts who said it was a Yellow Transparent, or what is also known as a June apple. It fruited a little bit later than it would have in Kentucky, but sure enough it was a June apple tree. Undoubtedly, it sprouted from the core of an apple brought up from Hopkins County, eaten and then tossed by one of my older sisters while playing along the creek. Dad treasured that one tree more than all the others he had planted himself, and in his care it produced beautiful, clear-skinned, sweet fruit.

Crockpot canning is a relaxing weekend project that's easy enough for non-canners to enjoy. It has none of the harried messiness of large canning projects, but with all of the the gratification of making something tasty and wholesome for family and friends.

Pat has also made pear butter using this recipe and says it turns out equally well. If you have eaten all of your June apples, don't worry. This recipe can be made with any soft cooking apple, or in



Herbs drying on a bamboo ladder.

Photo Provided

the case of pear butter a soft pear such as Bartlett will do nicely.

Janette's Crockpot Apple Butter

Opening a jar of this on a cold winter morning just might bring back a little bit of sweet summer sunshine.

8 cups peeled, cored and cubed apples
4 cups sugar
1/2 cup vinegar
2 teaspoons cinnamon

Place all ingredients in a slow cooker and cook on high for 6 hours.

To can the apple butter, bring it to a boil either in the slow cooker or on the stove. Fill clean and scalded pint or half-pint jars to 1/4 inch of the tops. Screw on the lids and water bath the jars for 15 minutes to ensure they have sealed properly. Makes 6-8 pints, depending on the water content of the apples you use.

Drying Herbs

Drying your own herbs is incredibly easy, requires no assuring, and gives the added assurance that your herbal recipes will be free from unwanted pesticides or insects. In western Kentucky, the most popular herbs are sage and dill, but most will do well in our area. Growing them yourself is also substantially cheaper than buying them, fresh or dried. This is something that one person can handle but would also be fun for the entire family.

You can dry herbs in an electric dehydrator, a regular oven, a microwave, or simply air dry them. To air dry your own herbs, all you need is some twine and a dry, well-ventilated area to hang them. Gather fresh herbs like you

would a bouquet of flowers, with a fair amount of stem. If you want to use your herbs for tea, gathering them after they begin to bloom makes a pretty presentation as a gift. Otherwise, most herbs are stronger in flavor just before they blossom.

Tie each type of herb separately in small bundles with the twine, leaving enough loose twine on the ends to then tie the bundles to a rafter or other selected area. More succulent, larger leaved herbs like basil or parsley should be tied in smaller bundles so that air can properly circulate around the leaves. When they are completely dry and crisp, remove any tough stems, then keep the leaves whole or rub them between your hands over a bowl to pulverize them. Store your herbs in water-tight containers in a cool place away from bright light; dried herbs will generally hold their flavor for about nine months.

This mixture of Mediterranean herbs can be mixed with olive oil for dipping crusty bread. Adjust the herbs to suit your own taste.

Bread Dipping Herbs

1 tablespoon each dried oregano, basil and rosemary
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon coarsely ground black peppercorns
1 teaspoon sea salt

Put all ingredients in a small jar and shake to blend. To use, pour 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil into a saucer or other shallow dish and sprinkle a tablespoon (or more to taste) of herbs onto the oil. Add a few shakes of grated Parmesan, if desired.