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ASK Aunt Daisy

THE USEFUL PIE-MELON

PIE-MELONS were a great old stand-by of the early settlers.

They could be used when no other fruits were available, and would grow easily and yield plentifully. Having a rather neutral flavour, they could be used to eke out limited quantities of rarer fruits—peaches or plums—and of course, the transport of produce was slow and difficult in those days. Instead of trains and service cars, and even planes, the settlers had to get their supplies by bullock-dray and horse-waggon. And just think what the roads were like! So pie-melons, like pumpkins and marrows, were important, and had not to take a back-seat against the lovely variety of fruits which we have to-day—Cape gooseberries, passionfruit, quinces, tree-tomatoes, as well as ordinary tomatoes.

In those days pie-melons were used for pies! They were cut into small dice and cooked tender first, with sugar and spice, before being covered with pie-crust—a kind of relation to the American pumpkin pie, which, of course, uses very finely-mashed and smooth, cooked pumpkin. How about trying a well-made melon pie now, flavoured with cape gooseberries or other fruit, and even lovely preserved ginger, which, though a little expensive, is again available.

Melon Jam Hints

Melon jam is a little tricky to make. It goes "sugary" if over-boiled, and an "old" melon simply won't boil soft. Do not use an unripe melon, either—but one that is just mature. For a small quantity of jam—(having regard to our limited supplies of sugar)—it is better to buy part of a large ripe melon than a smaller unripe whole one. Many people put the melon through the mincer, which is quicker than dicing it small, and also cooks quicker, thus saving fuel. Melon jam also takes longer to cook than most jams. The standard method is to prepare the melon overnight, and sprinkle it with half the sugar. Weigh it after preparing, and allow $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. of sugar to each pound of fruit; also a teacup of water to each pound, unless your recipe specifies more. For flavouring add about 1 lemon to each pound. Always simmer the pie-melon first, not too violently—until quite tender and soft. Be very particular about stirring when the sugar is added; for if it is not thoroughly and completely dissolved before the last "rolling boil" you will find your jam will turn "sugary" or crystallised. If no lemon is available, add $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of tartaric acid about 10 minutes before taking it up, to help it to set.

Melon and Cape Gooseberry Jam

Four pounds of melon; 2 lb. of cape gooseberries; $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of sugar; and $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints of water. Mince the melon, sprinkle with half the sugar, and leave overnight. Next day add the water, and simmer till the melon is soft and transparent, possibly about 2 hours. Add the remainder of the sugar, stir till dissolved, and bring to the boil again. Add the cape gooseberries and boil rapidly

for 30 minutes, or till the jam is a good consistency and will set when tried on a cold plate. Remove from the fire, and cool a little before bottling. Bottle warm, but not hot. This is like a real conserve, with the cape gooseberries whole in a lovely jelly.

Melon Marmalade

Four pounds of prepared melon; 2 large lemons; $5\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of sugar; and 5 cups of water. Shred the lemon finely as for ordinary marmalade, and leave all night with the diced melon and the water. Next day boil till clear and soft; then add the $5\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of sugar. Stir till properly dissolved, and then boil fast till it will set when tested.

Melon and Passionfruit

In this recipe the sugar and water are boiled first. Peel the melon, remove the seeds and cut into dice. To 3 lb. of the prepared melon, allow 3 lb. of sugar, and 1 pint of water; the rind of a lemon; about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of lemon juice, and at least half a dozen passionfruit. Put the sugar and water in a pan over heat; when dissolved, add the melon, lemon juice, and grated rind. Boil about 3 hours or until the melon is soft. Add the passionfruit pulp, including the pink pulp from inside the skins which have been boiled soft. Boil to setting consistency, which will not take very long.

Melon and Ginger Jam

This is most people's favourite. Five pounds of melon, 3 lemons, 4 lb. of sugar; $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of preserved ginger; pinch of cayenne pepper. If the ginger is not available, flavour to taste with ginger essence. Dice or mince the melon; cut the lemons finely; also the preserved ginger. Cover the melon and lemons with 2 lb. of the sugar, and let it stand all night. Boil together till all is tender, add the remaining sugar, the preserved ginger and cayenne pepper. Boil steadily till it will set when tested. Add the ginger essence, if using it instead of the preserved ginger, just before taking up.

Never Fail Melon Jam

Twelve pounds of melon; 9 lb. of sugar; 6 oranges; $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of preserved ginger. Dice or mince the melon, grate the orange rind into the fruit, add also the juice, and 4 cups of water, and boil. Stir occasionally for the first half hour, till tender, then add the warmed sugar and ginger. Stir till the sugar is dissolved. Boil till golden brown, and it will set when tested. Half quantities may be used. Note that in this recipe the melon is not left to stand all night.

Melon and Tree Tomato Jam

Five pounds of melon after cutting or mincing it; $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of tree tomatoes; the juice and grated rind of 2 lemons; and 6 lbs. of sugar. Pour boiling water over the tomatoes, skin them, and cut them up. Add the melon. Put in a pan and bring to the boil. Add half the sugar, and stir till dissolved. When the melon is tender, add the rest of the sugar, stir till thoroughly dissolved, add the juice and grated rind of the lemons, and boil fast till it will set when tested.

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