

PRESERVE BLACK CURRANTS

A special health article by DR. MURIEL BELL, Nutritionist to the Health Department

THIS season, the war must be won against the black-birds over the black currant territory. This imperative note is sounded in view of the new phase in our national war situation. With shipping difficulties looming up, there may be a shortage of oranges from Australia and the Islands. Oranges are our main source of Vitamin C for babies; but black currants are particularly rich in this vitamin—on the average, three to four times as rich.

Will everybody, therefore, co-operate, please, in using the black currant crop this year? This appeal is being launched through the co-operation of various workers—in the Plunket Society, Department of Home Science, A.C.E., and Department of Health—and of women who have been kind enough to supply last year's preserves for testing.

If you intend to preserve black currants in syrup, prepare the syrup first, e.g., using three cups of sugar to four cups of water. Boil. Choose small jars, because the fruit juice will thus be used more quickly once the jar is opened. Sound, ripe fruit is packed into the clean jars. The jars are stood in a saucepan or preserving pan containing hot water, and either a syrup, as hot as the jars will stand, or hot water, is cautiously poured over the fruit. Bring as quickly to the boil as possible. It is advisable, in order to reduce the time necessary to bring to the boil, to do only a few jars at a time. Put the lids on loosely. Keep the outside water-jacket boiling for 20 minutes to half an hour. Screw lids down tightly. Store in a dark, cool cupboard. If a dark cupboard is not available, tie brown paper round the jar. As the jar stands, the vitamin diffuses out of the fruit, and after some time the juice is as rich in the vitamin as the fruit. When the juice and puree is to be used for babies, the juice may be used first, then the fruit may be squeezed through a cloth. Avoid using a metal spoon or metal strainer.

Those who have no small preserving jars, will probably find that they can get quite good results if they use sterile jars and corks (sterilised by boiling). An old-fashioned method which was successful used to be to cover the corks with resin. Probably paraffin wax will do as well. Another old-fashioned method used to be to paste several layers of paper over the jars.

The method of preparing them in an aluminium or enamel saucepan or preserving pan will also be reasonably satisfactory, provided that the fruit is quickly brought to the boil, and that too much stirring is avoided. It can be ladled (with a cup, not a metal ladle), into the sterile preserving jars.

Avoid sieving or straining when the preserves are hot. The method of using home vacuum packing has also been found to retain the vitamin well; but probably few housewives have the necessary equipment for this.

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