

## Six Uses for Blackberries

At the time of year when summer slowly ebbs away and autumn edges its way in, what could be better than a walk in the countryside. And whilst out and about, why not look for the abundant blackberries just waiting to be picked - but once picked, what can we do with them?



### 1. Blackberry juice

After picking the ripest berries, put them in a large bowl and mash them into a pulp with a potato masher. Once mashed, strain the pulp through a fine sieve twice. This will remove the pips and any unwanted residue. Collect the remaining juice in a saucepan and bring to the boil for 3 minutes, adding sugar or sweetener to taste. When cooled, pour the juice into a bottle and keep in the fridge. Either drink it neat or diluted with water.

### 2. Blackberry jelly

As with blackberry juice, pick, mash and sieve the fruit but then sieve the juice again with muslin lining the sieve. This will ensure the juice is as clear as possible. Pour the juice into small jars and leave in a warm place such as the airing cupboard which will cause it to set into a light jelly. Delicious on scones, fresh bread and crackers.

### 3. Blackberry dye

Blackberry dye is one of the oldest dyes known to man. A lot of the fruit is required for this but it doesn't have to be ripe and in pristine condition. There is no problem with using under ripe, over ripe or even slightly mouldy berries because they are not to be consumed.

A large amount of berries are required and, as before, go to the sieving stage as outlined previously. The sieved blackberries should be placed in a large saucepan along with the item to be dyed e.g. a tee-shirt. Bring to the boil and

once boiling, remove from the heat and leave to rest for a day. Then squeeze the excess liquid gently from the garment and allow to dry. The colour dye should withstand even machine washing.

#### **4. Blackberry jam**

Put rinsed blackberries, which have had all stems and white hearts removed, in a bowl and cover them in sugar so that the berries are no longer visible. Leave to soak overnight. Next morning, put the mixture in a saucepan and bring to the boil gently taking care not to spill any as it will be very hot. After approx. 30 minutes, scoop out a tiny amount and put it into a glass containing cold water. If the mixture dissolves then continue boiling and testing the mixture at 5 minute intervals. When the jam stays together and hardens into a soft ball that you can roll in your fingers, it is ready. Leave it to cool for about 2 hours and then pour it into jars. The jam will keep for a year.

#### **5. Apple and Blackberry pie**

My favourite recipe for this wonderful dessert can be found at the following address: <http://britishfood.about.com/od/adrecipes/r/appleblackpie.htm>

Best served hot with custard, cream or ice cream.

#### **6. Making phone calls!**

Quite self explanatory I think!

**But as a just remember, English folklore warns never to pick blackberries after 10<sup>th</sup> October, because during that night the Devil either spits, stamps or urinates (depending on which telling of the tale one reads) on every bush.**

**You have been warned.....**