

Gooseberries

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Gooseberries thrive in Alaska's cool climate. The plants are easy to grow. The biggest problem people usually have is figuring out how to use the fruit. The following recipes provide a number of ideas on how to enjoy gooseberries. You'll probably need to grow your own, since the fruit is seldom available in markets.

Bushes should be planted 5 feet apart. They are not fussy about soil or pH. Use approximately 1 cup of fertilizer (8-32-16 or 10-10-10), evenly distributed, per plant, and work it into the soil in early spring. Compost can be mixed into the soil before planting, if available. To keep plants productive, prune regularly by completely removing canes older than three years. Keep only 9–12 canes per bush. Watch for imported currant worms. They can defoliate plants quickly. Harvest is typically from mid-August to mid-September. To reduce potential winter damage, make sure plants are well-watered until freeze up.

Pick gooseberries carefully, especially the thorny varieties. The less ripe the gooseberry, the more sour its taste will be. Some varieties become quite sweet and turn pink or purple when fully ripe. Varieties which have been grown in Alaska include Pixwell, Pankiw, Oregon Champ, Hinnomaki Yellow and Hinnomaki Red.

Storage & Preservation

How to Clean and Store

To clean gooseberries, spread a clean, dry terrycloth towel over a slanted surface, such as a cutting board with one end propped up a few inches above the other. Gently roll the berries down the towel; most of the debris and leaves will cling to the towel, while the berries roll off. Rinse berries and remove blossom and stem ends. Gooseberries should be stored covered in the refrigerator and will keep up to three weeks.

How to Freeze

Gooseberries can be frozen by arranging dry fresh berries in one layer on a cookie sheet, with the sheet then placed in the freezer. When frozen, transfer berries to freezer bags or containers. Properly frozen gooseberries will last up to two years.

How to Dry

Gooseberries should be dipped in boiling water to “check” the skin or steamed until the skin cracks. This will allow the berries to dry thoroughly. Spread berries on an open screen in a dehydrator and follow dehydrator directions for grapes. Gooseberries are dry when leathery to the touch. Store in a closed container in a cool, dry place. Gooseberries may be used as you would raisins or soaked in water for use in baking.

How to Extract Juice

Combine 8 cups of gooseberries and 1 cup water. Crush berries. Bring just to a boil and simmer 10 minutes. Strain through jelly bag or several layers of cheesecloth in a colander. Let the juice drip into a bowl. For clear juice, do not twist or press jelly bag or cheesecloth.
Yield—5½ cups.

How to Prepare Puree

Cooked method: Add 1 cup of water to 4 cups of gooseberries. Cook until skins have popped. Press through a food mill or strainer. *Yield—2 cups.*

Uncooked method: Place 4 cups gooseberries in a blender and blend until the consistency of thick puree.
Yield—2 cups.

Gooseberry Jelly

5½ cups prepared juice (about 8 cups fully ripe gooseberries and 1 cup water)
7 cups sugar
1 package (1¾ ounces) powdered fruit pectin

Prepare the juice by thoroughly crushing, one layer at a time, or grinding about 8 cups gooseberries. Place in saucepan; add 1 cup water. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer 10 minutes. Place in jelly bag and let drip. Measure 5½ cups juice into 6- or 8-quart saucepan. Measure sugar and set aside. Mix fruit pectin into juice in saucepan. Place over high heat and stir until mixture comes to a full boil. Immediately add sugar and bring to a full rolling boil and boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim off foam. Ladle quickly into hot sterilized jars, filling to within ¼ inch of tops. Wipe jar rims and cover with prepared two-piece lids. Screw bands tightly. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water bath. *Yield:* About 8 cups

Gooseberry Jam

4 cups prepared fruit (about 2 quarts fully ripe gooseberries)

6 cups sugar

1 pouch (3 ounces) liquid fruit pectin

Remove blossom and stem ends from about 2 quarts gooseberries; grind berries. Measure 4 cups into 6- or 8-quart saucepan. Thoroughly mix sugar into fruit in saucepan. Place over high heat, bring to a boil, stirring constantly. At once stir in fruit pectin. Then bring to a full rolling boil and boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim off foam. Ladle quickly into hot sterilized jars, filling to within ¼ inch of tops. Wipe jar rims, and cover with prepared two-piece lids. Screw bands tightly. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water bath. *Yield:* About 7 cups

Gooseberry Jam

5½ cups prepared fruit (about 2½ quarts fully ripe gooseberries)

7 cups sugar

1 package (1¾ ounces) powdered fruit pectin

Remove blossom and stem ends from about 2½ quarts of gooseberries; grind berries. Measure 5½ cups ground berries into 6- or 8-quart saucepan. Measure sugar and set aside. Mix fruit pectin into fruit in saucepan. Place over high heat and stir until mixture comes to a full boil. Immediately add sugar and stir. Bring to a full rolling boil and boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim off foam. Ladle quickly into hot

sterilized jars, filling to within ¼ inch of tops. Wipe jar rims and cover with prepared two-piece lids. Screw bands tightly. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water bath.

Yield: About 9 cups

Gooseberry Relish

5½ cups fully ripe gooseberries

¼ cup vinegar

1 small onion, thinly sliced

1¾ cups raisins, finely chopped

1–2 teaspoons ginger or dry mustard

7½ cups sugar

1 pouch (3 ounces) liquid fruit pectin

Thoroughly crush fruit, one layer at a time. Place in saucepan; add vinegar, onion, raisins and ginger or dry mustard. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer 10 minutes. Measure 3½ cups fruit mixture into 6- or 8-quart saucepan. Thoroughly mix sugar into fruit mixture in saucepan. Place over high heat and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. At once stir in fruit pectin. Then bring to a full rolling boil and boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim off foam with metal spoon. Ladle quickly into hot sterilized jars, filling to within ¼ inch of tops. Wipe jar rims and cover with prepared two-piece lids. Screw bands tightly. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water bath. *Yield:* About 9 cups

Fresh Gooseberry Pie

Pastry for double-crust, 9-inch pie (unbaked)

3 cups fresh gooseberries

1½ cups sugar

3 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca

¼ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon butter or margarine

Prepare pastry for double-crust, 9-inch pie. Remove stems and wash gooseberries; crush ½ cup gooseberries. Mix crushed gooseberries with sugar, tapioca and salt. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly and continue to boil for 2 minutes. Add remaining whole berries. Line 9-inch pie plate with pastry; fill with gooseberry mixture. Dot with butter. Adjust top crust, cutting slits to allow steam to escape; seal. Bake at 400°F for 35 minutes.

Recipes prepared and tested by Lynn Hanson, Master Food Preserver, 1994.

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