

"WHAT???? Did you just say Pickled Cherries?"

Why, yes, I did.

These are a Master Food Preserver's secret flavor bomb. A special treat that you can make at home and you can bet no one else has any. You know you have needs. The need to wow your friends with that secret menu item that no one else has ever thought of. Can you picture yourself serving these delectable little gems on an appetizer tray or as a garnish with that special meal and watching your friend's expression when they take that first bite? They turn and make eye contact and there you are with a little cat grin on your face that says, "Yes, I did it again!"

I see cherries slowly sneaking into the stores and roadside stands. After grazing on the fresh cherries for a week or two you might consider preserving some for later. Anyone can make cherry jam. You may want to make something far more interesting.

Pickled cherries are sweet and tangy. They are pickled in a sweet syrup that can be drizzled over cheesecake , over ice cream, or used as a sweet glaze on a pork roast. "What else can I do with them", you might ask? You mean besides standing over the sink slurping them down before anyone comes by and you have to share them? They are marvelous on a cheese platter, as a garnish for roasted meats and fowl, chopped up and spread on a turkey sandwich, as a garnish for salads, in a bread pudding, in a brown rice stuffing for Cornish Game Hens, sauteed with Swiss Chard, in a couscous dish...I'm getting hungry!!!

This recipe comes from The Complete Book of Small Batch Preserving:

Pickles Sweet Cherries

Yield: 3 pints

1 ¼ cups white vinegar
1 ¼ cups granulated sugar
¾ cups water
2 cinnamon sticks, about 4 inches long
2 tsp. whole cloves
1 tsp whole allspice
2 lbs. dark sweet cherries with stems

Combine all ingredients except cherries in a non-reactive sauce pan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and boil gently, uncovered, for 20 minutes.

Remove hot jars from the canner and pack cherries into jars. Pour hot syrup over cherries to within ½ inch of jar rim (headspace). Process for 15 minutes for pint jars. Adjust for elevation, as necessary.

Variations:

If you want a more savory syrup simply replace the spices in the above recipe with the following:

20 black peppercorns
2 bay leaves

If you like a Thai influence try replacing the spices with this mix:

1 tsp. Szechuan peppercorns
3 cinnamon sticks
3 bay leaves
3 pieces of star anise
2 tsp whole cloves
1 tsp. whole fennel seeds