

# American Red Raspberry

by Leslie Shallcross

The American red raspberry (*Rubus idaeus* L.) is a native North American species that grows throughout most of North America and across northern Europe to northwestern Asia. Wild raspberries can be found along riverbanks and road edges and in forest openings and borders. In Alaska, wild raspberries can be found in most of the Interior as far north as the southern Brooks Range, throughout most of Southcentral Alaska and along the eastern border areas of Southeast Alaska.

The wild red raspberry shrub grows in tangled thickets of reddish-brown, bristly canes 2 to 4 feet high. The leaves are pointed at the apex and rounded at the base and have irregular toothed edges. The flowers have five small white petals and the fruit is a roundish, ¾-inch bright red aggregate berry with many drupelets. The plant flowers in June and July and berries ripen in late July though the end of August. A ripe raspberry is bright red and will separate easily from the stem; the berry will have a hollow interior.

Despite the wide geographic range of the plant, wild raspberries may not produce abundant fruit. Other plants, through natural ecological succession, will gradually displace wild berry patches. For a reliable harvest, gardeners may want to plant one of the red raspberry cultivars recommended for Alaska.



A close relative of *Rubus idaeus* L. is the trailing raspberry, *Rubus pedatus*. The trailing raspberry, as suggested by the name, grows on a long, vinelike stem on a mossy forest floor. It grows in moist, wooded areas, with a range in Alaska limited to Southcentral and Southeast, Alaska. It has an excellent flavor and bright red color similar to *Rubus idaeus* L. The berry is composed of only a few drupelets that may be difficult to remove from the calyx, or stem, and an hour of picking may yield only a handful of berries. Trailing raspberries can be used in recipes for red raspberries.

Red raspberries are among the most popular berries consumed in the United States. Their intense, sweet-tart flavors are enjoyed fresh and in many prepared food products. The red raspberry's bright flavor combines well with other fruits, including many wild fruits of Alaska. Wild raspberries look and taste like cultivated, domestic red raspberries, although wild berries are slightly smaller. Wild and cultivated berries may be eaten fresh, frozen or canned or made into sauces, jellies, fruit leather and jams.

Dried red raspberry leaf is sometimes used for an herbal tea either alone or in combination with other herbs. Leaves can be picked throughout the season, dried and stored in airtight containers as you would any leafy herb. The leaf is certainly safe to use as a tea, but its use during pregnancy should probably be avoided because of documented effects on uterine tissue. Tannins in the leaf may cause a bitter or astringent taste.

## Nutrition

Current research on berries suggests that they may provide an important health boost and should be included on a regular basis. Recent and preliminary research suggests that deeply pigmented berries may be effective in fighting cancer cells, decreasing systemic inflammation, reducing heart disease and preserving brain health.

Raspberries, like most berries, are rich in antioxidant pigments, vitamins and other important phytonutrients. Raspberries are one of the richest dietary sources of ellagic acid, which has anti-inflammatory effects and has been linked to cancer prevention and heart disease prevention. Quercetin, one of the flavanols found in raspberries, has been found to be an effective anticarcinogen against skin, colon and mammary cancers in animal studies.

Raspberries are an excellent source of vitamin C, manganese and fiber, with one cup providing 25 to 35 percent of the recommended daily intakes for these nutrients. Some of the fiber in raspberries is soluble fiber in the form of pectin, which may help lower blood cholesterol levels and decrease heart disease risk.

## Storage and Preservation

### How to Clean and Store

Raspberries are very fragile. Unless they are exceptionally dusty, do not wash raspberries. Eat them the day they are picked for best flavor. Raspberries should be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator, but they will not keep more than two to three days. Store in shallow containers to prevent crushing the berries.

### How to Freeze

Spread raspberries in a single layer on a cookie sheet and place in the freezer. When frozen, transfer berries to freezer bags or containers. Properly frozen raspberries will last up to two years.

### How to Dry

Raspberries are not recommended for drying because they are too seedy and the hollow interior makes them difficult to dry. Raspberry puree may be dehydrated to make fruit leather.

- **To sterilize canning jars**, boil in water for 5 minutes.
- **To prepare two-piece lids** (rings and tops), wash, rinse and keep in hot water until ready to use.
- **If less sugar is desired** in recipes calling for pectin, be sure to use no-sugar-needed pectin and follow the instructions on the box.
- **To use a boiling water canner**, see instructions on page 3.

### How to Extract Juice

Combine 4 cups cleaned raspberries with 1 cup water. Crush berries. Bring just to a boil and simmer 10 minutes. Strain the juice through a 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. For long-term storage, the juice should be frozen or canned. *Yield:* 2 cups

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#### *Hot pack for juice*

Sterilize canning jars. Heat juice, stirring occasionally, until it begins to boil. Pour into hot jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process in a boiling water canner.

<i>Pints or quarts</i>	5 minutes
<i>Half gallons</i>	10 minutes

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### How to Prepare Puree

*Cooked method:* Add 1 cup of water to 4 cups of wild raspberries. Cook until softened. Press through sieve or food mill. *Yield:* 2 cups

*Uncooked method:* Rinse 4 cups of wild raspberries, drain, put in a blender and blend until the consistency is thick puree. Strain crushed raspberries through a sieve to remove the small seeds if desired. *Yield:* 2 cups

*For long-term storage*, the puree should be frozen: Pack into rigid containers leaving ½ inch headspace for expansion and freezing. Seal and freeze. Canning is not a safe method of preserving puree.

## Recipes

### Wild Raspberry Syrup

1 cup wild raspberry juice  
 1 teaspoon lemon juice  
 2 cups sugar

Combine all ingredients in saucepan and heat to 160°F. Use a candy thermometer; do not boil. The syrup is ready to use over waffles, pancakes, hot biscuits, ice cream and other desserts. The syrup will keep up to six months in the refrigerator without crystallizing.

*For long-term storage:* Sterilize pint or half-pint canning jars and prepare lids; immediately pour hot syrup into hot canning jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and add prepared two-piece lids. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water canner. *Yield:* 2 cups

## Wild Raspberry Fruit Leather

2 cups wild raspberry puree  
2 tablespoons honey or corn syrup

Combine puree and sweetener. Line a cookie sheet with plastic wrap. Spread puree mixture evenly about 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick over plastic, but do not push it completely to the sides of the cookie sheet. Oven dry at 140°F for approximately 6 hours, leaving oven door slightly open so moisture can escape. If drying in a dehydrator, follow manufacturer's directions for fruit leathers. *Yield:* 1 sheet

*Note:* Fruit leather variations can be made by combining other fruit purees or applesauce with raspberry puree for a total of 2 cups for each sheet. Seedless raspberry puree makes a better-tasting product and one that is easier to remove from a plastic dehydrator sheet. Raspberries and rose hips make an especially nice and nutritious puree.

## Wild Raspberry Jelly

3 cups wild raspberry juice      1/4 cup lemon juice  
5 cups granulated sugar      3 ounces liquid pectin

Sterilize pint or half-pint canning jars and prepare lids. Open liquid pectin pouch and stand upright in a cup or glass. Measure wild raspberry and lemon juices and sugar into a large saucepan. Place on high heat; stir constantly and bring to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down. Add the liquid pectin and heat again to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and quickly skim off foam. Immediately pour hot jelly into hot canning jars, leaving 1/4 inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and add prepared two-piece lids. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water canner.

*Yield:* 6 cups

## Wild Raspberry Jam

5 cups crushed wild raspberries  
1 package powdered pectin (1 3/4 ounces)  
7 cups granulated sugar

Sterilize pint or half-pint canning jars and prepare lids. Measure sugar and set aside. Measure prepared berries into a large saucepan. Add pectin and stir until dissolved. Bring to a full rolling boil over high heat, stirring constantly. At once, stir in sugar. Bring to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim off foam. Immediately pour jam into hot jars, leaving 1/4 inch headspace. Wipe jars rims and add prepared two-piece lids. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water canner.

*Yield:* 8 cups

## Raspberry Freezer Jam

2 cups crushed raspberries (about 4 cups whole berries)  
4 cups sugar  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
3 ounces liquid pectin

Combine fruit and sugar in bowl and mix for 3 minutes. Set aside for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Put liquid pectin in small bowl and stir in lemon juice. Stir pectin mixture into fruit mixture. Stir for 3 minutes. Fill freezer containers to within 1/2 inch of top. Cover with tight lids. Let stand at room temperature for 24 hours or until set, then place in freezer. After opening, store in refrigerator.

*Yield:* 6 cups

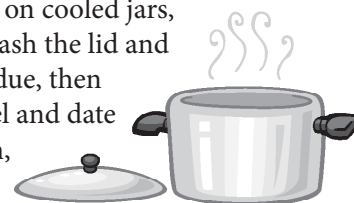
### To process in a boiling water canner, follow these steps:

Fill the canner halfway with water. Preheat water to a low boil. Place filled jars, fitted with lids, into the canner on the rack. Add more boiling water, if needed, so the water level is at least 1 inch above jar tops. Turn heat to its highest position until water boils vigorously. When the water boils, set a timer for the recommended processing time indicated in the recipe. Cover with the canner lid and lower heat setting to maintain a gentle boil throughout the processing time. Add more boiling water, if needed, to keep the water level above the jars.

When the jars have been boiled for the recommended time, turn off the heat and remove the canner lid. Using a jar lifter, remove the jars and place them on a towel, leaving at least 1 inch of space between the jars during cooling.

After cooling jars for 12 to 24 hours, remove the screw bands and test seals. Press the middle of the lid with a finger. If the lid springs up when finger is released, the lid is unsealed. If a lid fails to seal on a jar, remove the lid and check the jar-sealing surface for tiny nicks. If necessary, change the jar, add a new, properly prepared lid and reprocess within 24 hours using the same processing time. Alternately, adjust headspace to 1 1/2 inches and freeze, or store in the refrigerator and use within three days.

If lids are tightly sealed on cooled jars, remove screw bands, wash the lid and jar to remove food residue, then rinse and dry jars. Label and date the jars. Store in a clean, cool, dark, dry place.



## Raspberry Rhubarb Crisp

### Filling

½ cup brown sugar	3 tablespoons cornstarch
¾ teaspoon salt	1½ teaspoon cinnamon
2 cups raspberries	4 cups cut up rhubarb (about 8 stalks cut into ½-inch pieces)

Combine all filling ingredients in saucepan and cook until fruit is tender. Pour cooked fruit into a greased 9x13-inch pan.

### Topping

1½ cups flour	½ cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup rolled oats	½ cup butter or margarine

In a bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon and rolled oats. Cut in butter or margarine until the mixture is crumbly. Sprinkle topping over the fruit. Bake at 350°F for 45 minutes or until golden brown.

## Raspberry Crumb Cake

1½ cups flour	1 tablespoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt	¾ cup sugar
2 eggs	¼ cup butter or margarine, melted
2 tablespoons vanilla	
2 cups raspberries	½ cup lite sour cream

In a large bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt and sugar. Add the melted butter or margarine, vanilla and eggs. Mix until well combined. Fold in the raspberries and sour cream. Pour the batter into lightly greased 8x8-inch baking pan. Let stand 10 minutes at room temperature. Sprinkle crumb topping evenly over cake batter. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean.

### Crumb Topping

¾ cup brown sugar	½ cup butter or margarine
¾ cup flour	

In a small bowl, cream together brown sugar and butter or margarine. Add flour and mix until crumbly.

## UAF Cooperative Extension Service Resources

*Jams and Jellies – Lesson 5, Food Preservation Series,*  
FNH-00562E

*Canning Overview – Lesson 2, Food Preservation Series,*  
FHN-00562B

*Using Alaska's Wild Berries and Other Wild Edibles* (\$15),  
FNH-00120

*Fruit Leather,* FNH-00228

*Canning Basics DVD* (\$5), FNH-01280

*Jams and Jellies DVD* (\$5), FNH-01290

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Oregon Raspberry & Blackberry Commission, [www.oregon-berries.com](http://www.oregon-berries.com)

United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, <http://plants.usda.gov/>

Viereck, Leslie A. and Elbert I. Little, Jr. 2007. *Alaska Trees and Shrubs*, 2nd edition. University of Alaska Press.

[www.uaf.edu/ces](http://www.uaf.edu/ces) or 1-877-520-5211

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