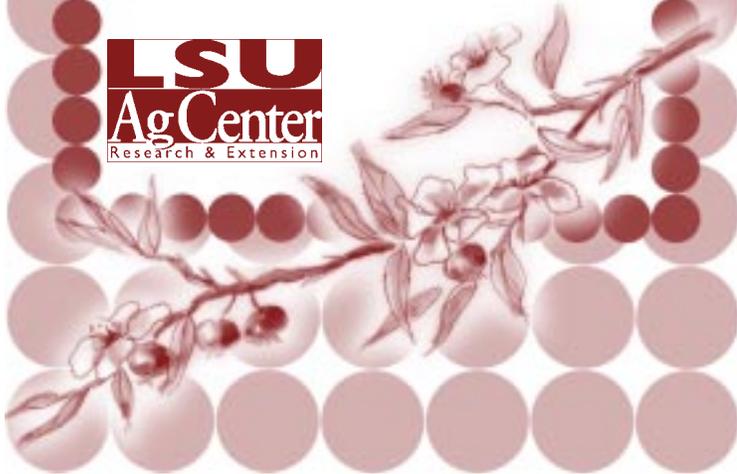


The Mayhaw

Out of the Swamp and Into the Orchard



If you've ever tasted mayhaw jelly, you'll agree it's among the finest, most delicious in the world. Its many colors can range from yellow to light pink, to bright red, to a reddish-brown. And the jelly has a unique aroma and indescribably delicious, wild-fruity flavor.

Mayhaw jelly has not been easy to find because the mayhaw tree historically has grown mainly in Louisiana river bottoms and swampy areas. Many of these areas have been cleared of trees by developers or the land has been posted, making much of the wild crop inaccessible to families who many years ago counted on mayhaw picking as an annual family outing.

Today, the mayhaw is grown in family orchards for its fruit and as a beautiful addition to the home landscape, thanks to retired Webster Parish merchant Sherwood Akin of Sibley. What began as a single seedling transplanted from the nearby woods by him some 30 years ago is now a mayhaw orchard of more than 1,000 trees.

Akin's enthusiasm about cultivating and marketing the mayhaw attracted the attention of Louisiana

Agricultural Experiment Station scientists and extension personnel. Research studies have been under way at several LSU AgCenter experiment stations and extension personnel are working with producers to develop orchards and expand the market for mayhaw products.

A Louisiana Mayhaw Association meets annually to enhance the efforts of producers and users.

What is the Mayhaw?

The mayhaw is the fruit of the thorny hawthorne tree. This small, round reddish fruit is about 1/2- to 3/4-inch in diameter and resembles a crabapple. It ripens from mid-April to early May, hence the name mayhaw. The tree flowers in February and March with a profusion of white blossoms. After frost, the leaves turn a beautiful yellow.

The mayhaw is a wild native fruit tree found along river bottoms and swamps from the Trinity River of Texas, east to Georgia and Florida, and throughout Louisiana. Although the tree is naturally found in wet, shady sites, it is well adapted to drier, better-drained land and produces more and better fruit in full sunlight. The trees are long-lived and can produce fruit for more than 50 years. They are more resistant to disease and can withstand low temperatures better than common fruit trees. LSU AgCenter research scientists at Calhoun are testing pesticides to find one that is effective in Mayhaw production.

Mayhaw Production

Commercial mayhaw orchards of all sizes are being planted. Twenty-three parishes each report from one to 65 acres planted with cultivated mayhaws, producing more than 100,000 pounds. Grant Parish leads the state with the largest number of acres as well as total pounds produced. Approximately 25,000 pounds of native mayhaws are harvested.

Commercial production of mayhaw jelly began about 1992. The latest development was the establishment of Grant Fruit Processing by Elmer Langston, mayhaw producer in Grant Parish, and retired engineer Charlie Hutchins. This processing plant has developed a successful method to concentrate mayhaw juice which is packaged and sold with pre-measured pectin and instructions for adding sugar and making jelly.

A number of small home businesses are making and selling gourmet mayhaw jelly.

Using Mayhaws

The mayhaw fruit is most often used for making jelly; the juice will also make delicious syrup and wine. The pulp is sometimes made into jams, butters and pies. Mayhaw juice or syrup is also used for punches, ice cream topping and to add flavor to sauces for meat, poultry and barbecue. The fully ripe fruit is edible raw but not desirable for eating out-of-hand.

Nutritional Value

The mayhaw is most often used in jelly, which we eat for pleasure rather than for its nutritional value. Jelly is a refined carbohydrate containing about 50 calories per tablespoon.

Studies at the University of Georgia Food Science and Technology Department showed that raw mayhaws are a good source of ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and beta carotene, which becomes vitamin A inside the body. In addition, they contain small amounts of minerals such as copper, iron, magnesium and potassium. Much of the ascorbic acid, however, is destroyed in cooking jelly.

Harvesting Mayhaws

When the mayhaws are ripe in April and early May, you can shake the tree and gather the fruit from a bed sheet or piece of plastic spread under the tree. LSU Agricultural Center scientists are using large nets under the trees to catch the berries as they fall. The netting is used instead of plastic because it breathes and the berries are not damaged. Old-timers recall scooping up the mayhaws with a bucket as the fruit floated on the water in streams or bogs.

Amount to Gather:

One gallon (4 quarts) or about 4 1/2 pounds of mayhaws will yield about 12 cups of strained, flavorful juice, enough for three batches of jelly. Two quarts of mayhaws cooked will yield 6 cups of fruit and about 2 cups of pulp when the drained fruit is put through a food mill.

Freezing Mayhaws

Mayhaws are generally cooked, the juice strained and made into jelly or syrup. Or it is frozen or canned to make fresh jelly year-round. If you're in a hurry or have a large quantity of fruit, freeze the

mayhaws whole. It's best to remove trash, decayed or damaged fruit. Wash, drain and package in airtight freezer bags or containers. They can be frozen without cleaning, too. Sort and clean while still frozen and before washing when ready to cook. They will hold a year or longer. Milk jugs are also acceptable for short-term storage of fruit.

Cooking Mayhaws for Juice, Jelly or Syrup

The most important thing in making jelly is to begin with a juice (jelly stock) that has a full-bodied, mayhaw flavor. If too much water is used in cooking, the unique fragrance and taste will not match up to what is expected in quality jelly.

To Prepare Juice or Jelly Stock:

Sort mayhaws, removing decayed fruit and trash. You can leave the tiny stems and dark blossom end on the fruit. Wash thoroughly. Measure or weigh fruit and put in large saucepan. For each gallon (4 quarts or about 4 1/2 pounds) of mayhaws, cover with 3 quarts (12 cups) of water. For 2 quarts of fruit (a little over 2 pounds), cover with 6 cups water. Bring to a boil, cover and cook gently for about 30 minutes.

Cool and drain juice first through a colander, pressing fruit lightly with the back of a spoon.

Then strain the juice through two or three thicknesses of damp cheesecloth, through a jelly bag or a clean thin white cloth.

Leave the sediment which settles to the bottom.

From 1 gallon of mayhaws you should have about 12 cups of strained juice. This will make three batches of jelly.

Some people recook the mayhaws a second time, mixing the juice with the first cooking. But flavor may not be quite as distinct. If you choose to recook the fruit, add about 6 cups of water for the original 4 quarts of mayhaws. Mash the fruit, bring to a boil and simmer for about 10 minutes. Repeat the draining and straining process.

To freeze juice:

It's easy to freeze the juice for making fresh jelly year round. Put 4 cups of juice (for one batch of jelly) in an airtight container--glass jar, rigid plastic container or heavy plastic freezer bag. Leave 1/2-



inch headspace in rigid containers or 1 inch in glass jars to prevent breakage.

To can juice:

Heat juice to simmering. Pour into sterilized jars, seal with prepared new lids and process in a boiling water bath canner for 10 minutes, pints and quarts. (See Canning Louisiana Fruits, Extension Publication Number 1892.)

Mayhaw Jelly

- 4 cups strained juice
- 1 box powdered pectin
- 5 1/2 cups sugar

Measure juice into a large pot (about 8- to 10-quart size). Mix pectin thoroughly with juice and bring quickly to a hard, rolling boil, stirring occasionally. Add all the sugar at one time. Stir until sugar dissolves, and bring again to a full rolling boil (a boil that rises to the top and cannot be stirred down). Boil hard for 1 minute and 15 seconds, stirring constantly. Remove from heat; skim off foam with a metal spoon. Pour at once into sterilized jelly jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe jar edge with a damp towel, and seal with new lids according to manufacturer's instructions. Makes about 6 half-pint jars.

Note: You can process 5 minutes in a boiling water bath to ensure a good seal.

Low methoxyl pectins are available for making jelly with less sugar.

Luscious Mayhaw Syrup

Prepare juice as for jelly stock. Make a delicious syrup for pancakes, french toast, waffles, pies and for a flavorful ingredient in salad dressing, meat sauces and other dishes.

For Syrup:

- 1 1/4 cups juice
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- plus
- 1/4 cup white corn syrup* (or 1/4 cup more sugar)



Mix ingredients in saucepan large enough for mixture to boil freely. Stir to dissolve sugar. Bring to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down. Boil about 7 or 8 minutes, or to 220 degrees F on candy thermometer. Remove from heat, skim with a metal spoon and pour into sterilized syrup bottles or jars; seal and refrigerate.

For long-term storage, fill half-pint or pint canning jars to within 1/4 inch of top; seal and process in a boiling water bath canner for 10 minutes. Makes about 2 half-pints.

*Using part corn syrup adds thickness without extra sweetness.

Sweet and Sassy Honey Mustard

Mix equal amounts of prepared honey mustard and mayhaw jelly. Add a dash or so of Worcestershire sauce and raisins. Heat. Great tasting sauce, glaze or marinade for ham, cocktail sausages, chicken and pork.

Mayhaw Party Punch

- 2 gallons mayhaw juice
- 4 quarts pineapple juice, unsweetened (almost 3 46-ounce cans)
- 8 cups sugar
- 3 packages strawberry fruit drink mix (about 4 teaspoons)
- 4 liters ginger ale or lemon-lime carbonated beverage
- Pineapple sherbet (optional)



Mix all ingredients except ginger ale. Chill. Add ginger ale when ready to serve. Add 1/2 gallon pineapple sherbet to punch bowl to make it special. Or, add ice ring with cherries or other garnishes. Makes about 125 punch cups (4 oz.) without sherbet. Each serving provides 110 calories, 27.5 gm carbohydrate, 5.2 mg vitamin C.

Laney's Mayhaw Pound Cake

- 1 box French vanilla cake mix
- 1 cup mayhaw juice and pulp
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup corn oil
- 4 eggs

Set oven at 350 degrees F. Mix last four ingredients. Add to cake mix in mixer and beat at medium speed for six minutes. Pour batter into sprayed bundt pan and bake for 40 minutes or until done. Let cool for 5 minutes; turn onto cake plate and glaze powdered, 1/2 cup mayhaw juice and two tablespoons melted margarine for glaze.

Mayhaw-Pecan Tarts (or Pie)

Cream Cheese Pastry:

- 1 3-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 stick margarine, room temperature
- 1 cup flour (maybe slightly more)

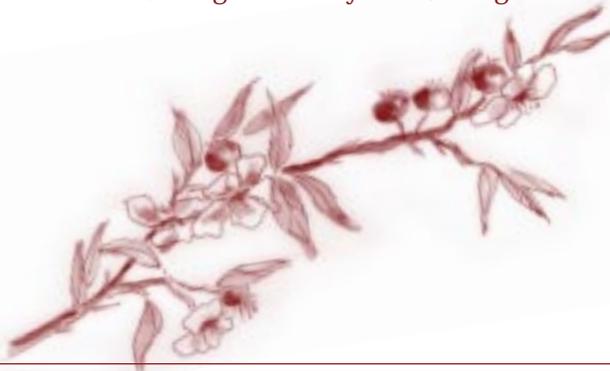
Blend cream cheese and margarine; stir in flour and mix until smooth. Form into ball. Use fingers to press 3/4-inch marble-sized portions into small muffin tins. Fill with mayhaw-pecan pie filling and bake. Enough for 48 thin pastry shells.

Mayhaw-Pecan Filling:

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup mayhaw syrup (or melted jelly)
- 2 tablespoons stick margarine
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup pecans, chopped



Mix sugar, syrup and margarine and heat on low heat until sugar is dissolved. Gradually add warm mixture to beaten eggs and vanilla. For tarts, put a few chopped pecans in unbaked tart shells and pour mixture over them until 2/3 full. Bake at 350 degrees F for about 25 minutes. For a pie, add pecans last and pour into pastry shell. Bake as usual. Freezes well. Enough filling for 48 small tarts. Each tart provides 69 calories, 8.9 gm carbohydrate, 3.5 gm fat.



Mayhaw Cheese Ring

- 1 pound sharp cheese, grated
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise (light)
- 1/4 cup minced onion
- 1 clove minced garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- dash hot sauce
- 1 cup mayhaw jelly

Combine all ingredients except jelly and mix well. Chill. Form into mold or ring. Fill ring with mayhaw jelly. Garnish with parsley. Serve with crisp crackers. Serves 24. Each serving provides 151 calories, 13 gm carbohydrate, 10.4 gm fat.

Mayhaw Christmas Pepper Jelly

- 4 cups mayhaw juice
- 1 package powdered pectin
- 5 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/4 cup fresh, seeded, chopped jalepeno peppers
- 1/4 cup fresh, seeded, chopped red hot chili peppers (or other red hot peppers)
- 1/2 cup vinegar

Add 1/2 cup sugar and pectin to mayhaw juice. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Add remainder of sugar and bring to 200 degrees F (a simmering boil). Simmer for 15 minutes. Skim foam. Add chopped peppers and vinegar. Simmer for 20 minutes longer. Pour quickly into sterilized jars and seal. Invert 3 or 4 times during the next 30 minutes. Makes about 6 half pint jars.

Serve over cream cheese with crackers.

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