



Sweet Wild Berries

Follow a Trail of Berry Farms across Louisiana

Growing up on the island of Bermuda, next to a small banana orchard, my father nurtured a garden full of carrots, potatoes, onions, and radishes. I loved pulling up the bright green tops; it was like a natural Easter egg hunt. When we moved back to New Orleans, one of my fondest memories was of visiting relatives in Hope, Arkansas, traveling in our Chevy Biscayne along Highway 1. Straddling the window seat, hair whipping across my face, every mile was a history lesson as I studied a constant blur of farmlands.

I recently revisited my youth when I took a nostalgic road trip, gathering fresh berries straight from farms as I picked my way across the region. I followed a trail of blueberry and strawberry farms with shaded picnic areas in park-like settings. Berry season runs, more or less, from early April through mid July.

DeSoto Parish: Hillcrest Farm, Gloster

In northwest Louisiana, Hillcrest Farm claims to be the largest blueberry farm in the state, with 77 acres of mature blueberry bushes and 62 acres of newly planted fields. In addition to blueberries, Hillcrest plants two acres of blackberries and three acres of strawberries.

“We have a beautiful picnic area where families can enjoy nice shade while viewing the highest point in Desoto Parish, which is our farm,” said Daye Alexander. “We have four beautiful ponds and huge blueberry bushes as far as the eye can see.”

Add a little lesson in berry agriculture and tour the blueberry-processing facility that processes thousands of pounds of fresh blueberries. While touring the facility, cool off with homemade blueberry lemonade and sample a variety of jellies, jams, syrups, preserves, and much more.

DeSoto Parish: Shuqualak Farms, Frierson

South of Shreveport, near I-49, Shuqualak Farms is small and inviting, with six acres of blueberries and four

acres of blackberries. Open from early June to mid July, visitors are provided with a 5-quart bucket and strap for collecting their harvest. Berries are packaged in freezer-safe bags and children are given 1-quart take-home buckets. Complimentary blueberry ice pops are given to anyone who picks.

The gift shop sells locally grown honey, blueberry juice, blueberry lemonade concentrate, and ice pops by the dozen. The farm includes a picnic area, restroom, complimentary cold water, water mister, and a country setting. Special considerations are given to school and church groups.

East Feliciana Parish: Berry Sweet Orchards, Ethel

North of Baton Rouge is Louisiana's first state-certified organic you-pick blueberry orchard. Family owned and operated since 1990 by Cliff and Susan Muller, Berry Sweet Orchards offers two acres with 1,500 organically grown and cultivated blueberry bushes in the beautiful countryside of Ethel, Louisiana.

“We use only NOP (National Organic Program) certified all-natural fertilizers and soil builders on our blueberry crop,”

If you decide to set out on a venture of your own, keep in mind that most farms are open seven days a week during picking season and offer products made from their fresh produce. Wear closed-toe shoes, no flip-flops or sandals—an old pair of tennis shoes with socks is perfect. Try to get there in the morning hours outside the warmer part of the day and be sure to bring hat and sunscreen. Bring an ice chest with ice and water and room to haul home the berries.

Gallon-sized zip-top bags or shallow containers work best for storing berries. Layers of paper towels will add cushion. Call first for times and check on produce availability. There are many berry farms offering personal harvest opportunities.

For more information, visit the Louisiana pick-your-own berries website: pickyourown.org/LA.htm.

explained Cliff Muller. “No synthetic pesticides or herbicides have been used on or near our blueberries or in the orchard.”

The farm provides produce bags and picking buckets. In addition to blueberries, they offer other seasonal organic produce including heirloom tomatoes, squash, melons, and more.

Tangipahoa Parish: Liuzza Farms, Independence

Tangipahoa Parish is the state's leading producer of strawberries. A multi-generational farm business, the Liuzza family works 500 acres in Independence filled mainly with the plump red jewels. Kevin Liuzza, fifth-generation farmer, and his wife, Elizabeth, manage 100 acres of strawberry plants dedicated to family picking and grocery inventory.

Their newly opened fruit stand offers fresh strawberry preserves, strawberry syrup, and sugar-free preserves. School field trips and senior trips are welcome.

Another Liuzza business, Berry Town Produce, with locations in Ponchatoula and Hammond, sells homegrown produce, jams, jellies, and breads, along with home-cooked lunches and dinners made from family recipes.

Livingston Parish: Mrs. Heather's Strawberry and Pumpkin Patch, Albany

Mrs. Heather entertains thousands of children every year at her strawberry patch with five "pick-em" acres available from mid-March to Mother's Day. Known for their many field trips, Mrs. Heather also welcomes families, Scout troops, church groups, and birthday parties. The Patch sells chocolate-covered strawberries and Queenie's Strawberry Jam, made by 88 year-old Maw Maw Hortense Cunningham.

In addition to the thrill of picking and eating strawberries on the farm, children enjoy the petting zoo and Mrs. Heather's stories about growing strawberries. "The kids can play with the farm animals and farm toys," she said, adding that there are numerous picnic tables. "I love to see the kid's faces when you tell them about growing strawberries and pumpkins."



Washington Parish: Country Fair Farm, Franklinton

For 15 years, every spring families from both sides of Lake Pontchartrain take the scenic drive to Country Fair Farm in Franklinton for a fun-filled day of blueberry picking. Stroll through 15 acres of blueberries and have lunch at the many picnic tables scattered throughout the 200-acre tree farm, complete with large pond. Country Fair Farm also sells garden vegetables, and mayhaw and blueberry jelly made fresh from the farm.



St. Tammany Parish: Ridemore Ranch and Berry Farm, Covington

Linda Prats and her husband, Danny, own Ridemore Ranch and Berry Farm in Covington. The 10-acre farm devotes 2.5 acres to both blueberries and blackberries and offers honey collected from the berry blossoms.

"We have a picnic area, horses to pet, and general farm activities to participate in," said Linda Prats, adding she often gives informal lessons about farming. ♣

Fresh Louisiana berries in season.





CARING FOR BERRIES

Store unwashed berries in containers or gallon-sized zip-top bags layered with paper towels. Refrigerated berries will last about two days. Frozen blueberries can last from season to season or beyond.

When storing strawberries in the refrigerator, layer them in paper towels. Serve at room temperature after

washing with a spray of cool water. Whole berries can be frozen in zip-top freezer bags for jams, smoothies, and homemade ice cream. Add berries to cereal, smoothies, or snacks straight from the refrigerator or freezer.

Berries are fat-free, low in calories, and have fiber, vitamin C, and disease-fighting antioxidants.

Berry Recipes

Strawberry Nut Bread

MAKES 2 LOAVES

Courtesy of the late Maw-Maw Margie Liuzza, Independence


- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 1/4 cups vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs, well beaten
- 1 cup chopped Louisiana pecans
- 2 cups frozen Louisiana strawberries, defrosted and drained

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Mix flour, cinnamon, salt, and baking soda together. Set aside.

In a separate bowl, mix oil and sugar and beat for 2 minutes with an electric mixer. Add eggs and mix. Combine with flour mixture and mix until moistened. Fold in pecans and strawberries.

Pour mixture into 2 greased 9x5x3-inch loaf pans and bake for 50 to 55 minutes until cake tester inserted in center comes out clean.

 **PAIR WITH:** Emeril Pink Moscato



Blueberry Juice

MAKES 2 CUPS

- 4 cups fresh or frozen Louisiana blueberries
- 2 cups water

Crush berries thoroughly, add water, and bring to a boil in a Dutch oven set over medium-high heat. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 3 to 4 minutes. Drain through colander; pressing berries to extract all the juice. Strain juice through 3 or 4 thicknesses of damp cheesecloth.

Luscious Blueberry Syrup

MAKES ABOUT 2 HALF-PINTS (16 SERVINGS)

Courtesy of Hillcrest Blueberry Farm, Gloucester

- 1 1/4 cups Blueberry Juice (method above)
- 1 3/4 cups sugar OR 1 1/2 cups sugar plus 1/4 cup white corn syrup*
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Mix ingredients in saucepan large enough for mixture to boil freely. Stir to dissolve sugar. Bring to a full raging boil that cannot be stirred down.

Boil 3 or 4 minutes. 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.

*Chef's Note: Using part corn syrup adds thickness without extra sweetness.

Cajun Blackberry Dumplings

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Courtesy of Louisiana Cookin' columnist Frank Davis, New Orleans

- 4 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 cup whole milk
- 2 large whole eggs, well beaten
- 3 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla
- 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 4 cups bottled water
- 1 1/2 quarts blackberries
- whipped cream or vanilla ice cream for serving

In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together melted butter, milk, eggs, 1 cup sugar, and vanilla. In a separate bowl, combine flour and baking powder. Add dry ingredients to liquid ingredients and stir, but do not over-mix.

When dumpling batter is ready, combine water, 2 1/2 cups sugar, and blackberries in a large skillet. Cook fruit over a medium heat until mixture thickens. Drop dumpling batter by heaping teaspoonfuls into blackberry sauce mixture in skillet. Cover and cook until dumplings rise.

Test them with a fork to see if they are done. When a fork inserted into dumplings come out clean, remove them from the skillet and continue with the remaining batter.

Serve warm right out of the skillet with the blackberry sauce mixture ladled over. Top each dish with rich dollops of whipped cream or ice cream.

 **PAIR WITH:** Royal Tokaji (Red Label)

Blueberry Pancakes

MAKES 4 TO 5 SERVINGS

Courtesy of Hillcrest Blueberry Farm, Gloucester

- 2 eggs
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 cup fresh or frozen Louisiana blueberries

Preheat griddle to medium.

Beat eggs until light and fluffy; add milk.

Sift together flour, sugar, baking soda, and salt. Add to egg-milk mixture; beat until smooth with an electric mixer. Stir in butter and fold in blueberries.

Pour or scoop the batter onto the oiled griddle, using approximately 1/4 cup for each pancake. Brown on both sides and serve hot.



Cajun Blackberry Dumplings

cajun • creole
Recipe
CD COLLECTION



from Louisiana Cookin'

Nearly
1,600
authentic
recipes
on CD—
only \$30!

Order your copy
today!

Makes a great gift!

louisianacookin.com
888.884.4114 • 504.482.3914

Louisiana
cookin'TM

Blueberry-Peach Pie

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

Courtesy of Hillcrest Blueberry Farm, Gloucester

- 3 cups peeled, sliced Louisiana peaches
- 1 cup fresh or frozen Louisiana blueberries
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons butter
- No-Fail Pie Crust (recipe follows) or two 9-inch rolled refrigerated pie crusts

Preheat oven to 425°F. Combine peaches, blueberries, and lemon juice. Set aside.

In a small bowl, combine sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Sprinkle sugar mixture over fruit and toss lightly. Let stand 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, roll pastry dough into 2 11-inch discs and line a 9-inch pie pan with 1 of the discs, mounding in center. Dot with butter.

Carefully place remaining pastry disc on top of filling. Trim top crust and fold under edges of bottom crust or cut the disc into strips and use in a lattice atop pie. Flute edges. Bake 45 to 50 minutes or until fruit is tender and crust is golden brown. Partially cool on rack. Serve warm.



PAIR WITH: Verdi Spumante

No-Fail Pie Crust

MAKES 1 9-INCH DOUBLE PIE CRUST

- 3 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoon coarse salt
- 1/2 cup lard, cut into pieces
- 1/2 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 egg, well beaten and chilled
- 6 tablespoons ice water (plus more, if needed)
- 1 teaspoon vinegar, chilled

Sift flour and salt together into a large bowl. Add lard and butter and cut them into flour with a pastry blender until they resemble small peas.

In a separate bowl, mix the egg, water, and vinegar. Add to flour mixture and mix quickly with your hands until just combined.

If too dry, add a little more cold water, a tablespoon at a time. Roll dough into a ball and slightly flatten. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before using.

Blueberry-Lemon Iced Tea

MAKES 5 CUPS

Courtesy of Judy Alexander, Hillcrest Blueberry Farm, Gloucester

- 1 16-ounce package frozen Louisiana blueberries
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- 4 cups water
- 3 family-sized tea bags
- 3/4 cup sugar
- lemon slices for garnish if desired

Bring blueberries and lemon juice to a boil in a large saucepan set over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until berries burst, about 5 minutes.

Remove from heat and pour through a fine wire mesh strainer into a bowl, using the back of a spoon to squeeze out the juice. Discard solids. Reserve juice.

Wipe saucepan clean. Add 4 cups of water and bring to a boil. Add tea bags and let stand 5 minutes. Remove and discard tea bags. Stir in sugar and reserved blueberry juice. Pour into a pitcher; cover and chill 1 hour. Serve over ice. Garnish with lemon slices if desired.



Blueberry-Peach Pie

Blueberry Cake

MAKES 8 TO 10 SERVINGS

Courtesy of Marilyn Laramy, Natchitoches

- 2 cups fresh Louisiana blueberries
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 1 stick of butter, melted
- 2 eggs
- 1 18.25-ounce package butter cake mix or yellow cake mix

Sprinkle sugar over blueberries and set aside for at least 1 hour.

Pre-heat oven to 350°F.

Mix cream cheese and butter with an electric mixer until fluffy. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating well. Add cake mix and beat well to combine. Fold in reserved berries. Pour into a greased Bundt pan and bake for 40 minutes or until surface springs back when touched.

Blueberry Lemonade

MAKES 1 GALLON

Courtesy of Daye Alexander, Stonewall

- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 1/2 cups lemon juice
- 1 quart fresh Blueberry Juice (see page 45)
- lemon slices for garnish

Place all ingredients in a gallon container. Fill the container to the top with water. Chill and serve. Garnish with lemon slices.

Blueberry Dessert Crêpes

MAKES 20-24 SERVINGS

Courtesy of Maurice Head Jr., Poverty Hollow Farms, Vivian

- 1 cup red wine
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup red currant, mayhaw, or muscadine jelly
- 2 tablespoons arrowroot
- 4 tablespoons cold water
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 4 cups fresh or frozen Louisiana blueberries, washed and drained
- confectioners' sugar, for dusting
- whipped cream or sour cream, for serving
- 25 Dessert Crêpes (recipe follows)

Combine wine, orange juice, and jelly in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Dissolve arrowroot in water and add to boiling liquid. It will begin to thicken immediately. Remove from heat and add the blueberries.

Preheat oven to 400°F. Put 2 to 3 tablespoons blueberries in each crêpe. Roll crêpes and place in a buttered oven-proof dish. Dot crêpes with butter and bake for 15 minutes until golden. Remove from oven, dust heavily with confectioners' sugar. Serve with whipped cream or sour cream.



Blueberry Lemonade



Dessert Crêpes

MAKES 25

- 4 eggs
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tablespoons Grand Marnier
- 1 tablespoon melted butter

Beat eggs in medium mixing bowl. Gradually add flour and sugar, alternating with milk and water, beating with mixer or whisking until smooth.

Add in Grand Marnier, and melted butter.

Refrigerate batter at least 1 hour before use.

Heat a 6-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat and brush with melted butter. Pour in 1 tablespoon of crêpe batter and tilt the pan so batter will spread over entire bottom of pan. Cook quickly on both sides. Crêpes should brown slightly but not become crisp. Stack crêpes on a plate or cutting board with a square of waxed paper between each. Continue until all batter is gone.

After they have cooled, stacked crêpes may be stored in sealable plastic bags in the refrigerator for several days or in the freezer for up to 2 months. When using frozen crêpes, thaw on a rack before gently peeling apart.

CHEFS TO WATCH

Join us August 22 for the
2011 Chefs to Watch Awards Dinner and Gala
 tickets available at louisianacookin.com



GET THERE

Hillcrest Farm

634 Ferguson Road, Gloster, LA 71030
hillcrestblueberryfarm.com
 318.617.7497

Shuqualak Farm

pickyourown.org/LA.htm
 318.797.8273

Berry Sweet Orchards

5110 Brown Road, Ethel, LA 70730
berrysweetorchards.com
 225.683.8584

Liuzza Farms

louisianastrawberries.net
 985.345.4735

Berry Town Produce

berrytownproduce.com
 Ponchatoula 985.386.0025
 Hammond 985.345.0048
 Express store in Hammond
 985.345.0004

Mrs. Heather's Patch

31458 Highway 43, Albany, LA 70711
thfarms.com
 225.567.3493

Country Fair Farm

23671 Hwy 25, Franklinton, LA 70438
pickyourown.org/LA.htm
 985.839.8923

Ridemore Ranch and Farm

22154 John T. Prats Road,
 Covington, LA 70435
pickyourown.org/LA.htm
 985.809.9967

Deborah Burst specializes in food, travel, and historical architecture with work in local, regional, and national publications. She lives in the piney woods of Mandeville but returns often to her hometown of New Orleans.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR EXECUTIVE CHEF COLT PATIN!!
 WE ARE PROUD OF YOU!

LoUISIANA's Cajun Restaurant

Real Cajun! Real Good!

FRESH LOUISIANA SEAFOOD
 BOILED, FRIED OR GRILLED

PASTAS • GUMBO • SALADS • PO-BOYS • STEAKS • RIBS

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK – LUNCH THRU DINNER – YEAR ROUND

FRESH MARKET NOW OPEN
 LOUISIANA SEAFOOD • SPECIALTY MEATS • PRODUCE
 SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE DISHES FROM THE RESTAURANT.

Where fresh really means fresh!
 OPEN MON THRU SAT 8AM TIL 7PM

Henderson-Cecilia exit 115 **(337) 667-6148**
 1/2 mile North of I-10 on LA Hwy. 347 www.crawfishtownusa.com

REAL CAJUN, REAL GOOD COOKBOOK BY CHEF PATIN AVAILABLE ONLINE.

MAGIC METHOD

Barbecue Magic Dip

Makes 1 cup

2½ teaspoons **Chef Paul Prudhomme's Magic Barbecue Seasoning®** or **Magic Salt Free Seasoning®**

1 cup sour cream

Combine the ingredients in a small bowl. Stir well until fully combined. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Note: the flavor of this dip gets better as it sits in the refrigerator; so, if convenient, make it ahead. Copyright © 2000 by Paul Prudhomme

Chef Paul Prudhomme's Magic Seasoning Blends® substitute for salt, pepper and other herbs and spices in any recipe.

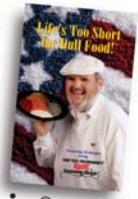
www.chefpaul.com



MAGIC MENU

Choose from fifteen (15) all natural Magic Seasoning Blends®, Magic Pepper Sauce®, Magic Sauce & Marinades®, and Magic Chiles (7)

Purchase Chef Paul's NEW paperback cookbook, **Life's Too Short for Dull Food™** and receive a 5.5 oz. canister of **Magic Barbecue Seasoning®** **FREE** with purchase! Retail Value \$3.50



Send \$4.00 (check money order) to:
 Magic Seasoning Blends
 P.O. Box 23342
 New Orleans, LA 70183
 ATTN: Magic Barbecue Offer

Toll Free 1-800-457-2857

Cajun Injector®

ELECTRIC DIGITAL SMOKER

FOR PERFECTLY SMOKED MEAT...EVERY TIME

ALSO TRY:



AVAILABLE AT POPULAR SPORTING GOODS AND GROCERY STORES!



- POP-UP DIGITAL CONTROL PANEL
- STAINLESS STEEL CABINET
- CONTINUOUS TEMPERATURE
- SIDE ACCESS WOOD PELLET CHUTE
- 5 CHROME SMOKING RACKS
- INSULATED FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY
- EASY TO CLEAN
- FOOD TEMPERATURE PROBE
- JERKY AND RIB/SAUSAGE RACKS
- OVEN MITTS

www.cajuninjector.com