

Jam — WaRiinyaq

WaRiinyalinaya'aqa.—I should make it into jam.



Photo: Gayla Pedersen with homemade berry jam.

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Jam and jelly making are favorite summer activities. People enjoy harvesting quantities of Kodiak's wild fruit and preserving it for winter. Today, many people cook their fruit with sugar and store it in glass jars. In addition to topping toast and desserts, jams are often used as a condiment. People place a dollop of tart jam on a piece of halibut or venison to enhance the flavor. The modern practice of preserving summer berries is part of a long Alutiiq tradition. In classical Alutiiq society, people stored quantities of berries in oil-filled seal stomachs. Tied shut and hung from the household rafters, these containers could keep summer fruits far into winter.

Although salmonberries, blueberries, and cranberries are popular bases for jams and jellies, people use many other fruits and even flowers to make sweet condiments. For example, the brilliant magenta blossoms of fireweed can be steeped with water, lemon juice, and sugar, and the liquid thickened with pectin to make jelly. Rose hips, rose petals, and the rhubarb-like stems of sourdock are also cooked and sweetened to make tasty preserves.

Another way people enjoy summer fruit is by making qayusaak—highbush cranberry sauce. To create this tangy desert, cook kalina berries, sugar, water, and cornstarch. Heat the berries on low heat until they release their juice, then strain them to remove the pulp. To the remaining juice add sugar and cornstarch and cook the liquid down until it makes a thick, sweet soup. You can eat this treat warm and topped with canned milk or whipped cream or store it in a jar.