



# Home Grown Blackberries

Blackberries have been found to grow in the wild across the North American continent for ages. Unfortunately, blackberries are extremely seasonal depending on the regions' climates. Moreover, shipping decreases the quality of blackberries, making them highly unavailable throughout the year. Eckert's blackberries ripen in mid-July, and usually only last three weeks or so.

Blackberries are considered a bramble, since they are grown on a bush. Blackberries, like their relative the raspberry, form a cluster of small fruits, called drupelets. Unlike raspberries, these drupelets remain centered around the core even after the berry is picked. Like many other brambles, blackberries are rich in antioxidants including vitamins C and E, as well as ellagic acid. Even after being cooked, blackberries have plenty of ellagic acid present, which is thought to prevent certain cancers and chronic diseases.

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## Selecting Fresh Blackberries

When selecting fresh blackberries, look for berries with a purplish-black color. If any red is present, the berries are under ripe. They should be dry and firm and free of mold. Make sure to check the bottom of the container for mold or crushed berries, before purchasing.

## Storing Blackberries

As mentioned earlier, blackberries are extremely perishable, and need to be stored in a specific manner. First remove overripe and damaged berries. Pat dry with a paper towel. Place in a shallow plate and cover with a paper towel. Do not heap the blackberries on top of each other, for this increases the risk of damage. Cover the plates with plastic wrap. Blackberries will last approximately 2 days if stored in this fashion.

## Freezing Blackberries

Since blackberries are so seasonal, this is an easy way to lengthen the amount of time you get to enjoy them. Place blackberries on a cookie sheet, side by side. Put the cookie sheet in the freezer until the berries are solidly frozen. Then move blackberries to a heavy plastic bag, or airtight tupperware bowl, making sure all the air is out. The berries will last for approximately six months.



## Canning Blackberries

(0-1000 ft Altitude)

### Medium Sugar Syrup

3 cups sugar

4 cups water

Add sugar slowly while heating water, stirring constantly to dissolve. Bring to a gentle boil. Yields 5 1/2 cups of syrup.

### Raw Pack

Fill jars with any of the raw berries, shaking down gently while filling. Cover with hot syrup, leaving 1/2 inch headspace.

### Processing

Place jars on rack immediately after packing. Lower filled rack into canner. Jars should be covered by 1 to 2 inches of water. Add additional boiling water if needed. If you add more water, pour between jars, not directly on the jars. Cover pot with lid. When the water comes to a rolling boil start to count the processing time, 15 minutes for pints, 20 minutes for quarts. When the cooking time is up, remove jars at once and place on a rack or on towels away from heat and away from any draft.

After jars have cooled, between 12 and 24 hours after processing, check seal. To do this press down on the center of the lid. The lid should be con-caved and not move when pressed. Do not be alarmed if during the first hour or so after cooking if you hear a popping sound come from the jars. This most often means that the vacuum effect has taken place causing the lids to pop down and seal.