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HOME PREPARATION OF MARASCHINO CHERRIES

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Frequently, requests have been received from housewives for a simple recipe for the preparation of maraschino cherries in small quantities such as the average family might use. The following directions are modified from commercial methods and are given for one gallon of pitted cherries. If greater or smaller amounts are prepared, the other material used will necessarily be varied accordingly. At the end of the circular will be found a list of several concerns from whom materials such as dyes, and pitting spoons may be obtained. A table is also included by which one may convert the various weights of materials specified to units of teaspoons, tablespoons, or cups.

Utensils. For bleaching the fruit, earthenware, glass or wooden containers should be used. For the dyeing and syruping process, copper, stainless steel or aluminum materials are suitable. Enamelled ware may also be used if the surface is not chipped or broken. Ordinary steel or iron ware must be avoided.

Bleaching. It is preferable, if possible, to purchase a commercially prepared bleaching solution from nearby canneries or fruit processing plants where cherries are being packed. If such establishments are not sufficiently near, a satisfactory bleaching preparation may be made by adding to a gallon of water $1/6$ ounce of citric acid, crystals or powdered, $1/2$ ounce of calcium carbonate (precipitated chalk or whiting) and 3 ounces of sodium-acid-sulfite, or sodium bi-sulfate crystals or powder (the latter two names represent the same compound and it should not be confused with sodium sulfite). The mixture should be stirred with a stick or wooden spoon until the citric acid, sodium acid-sulfite and as much as possible of the calcium carbonate have dissolved. The cherries, with stems attached, are placed in an earthenware or glass jar or wooden pail or keg and well covered with the bleaching solution. The container is tightly covered and set aside for two weeks or until such time as it is desired to dye them. If tightly covered they may be kept several months in a bleaching liquor and many housewives may prefer to keep them in this manner until near the holiday season when they may be finished for use at that time. If it is wished to stem the cherries before bleaching, they should be placed immediately in the bleaching solution as they are stemmed to prevent the formation of a brown stain at the point where the stem is removed and which, once formed, is not removed by the bleaching action of the solution. Cherries for bleaching should be somewhat less ripe than for canning and fruit showing blemishes from limb rubs and bruises should not be used as the brown spots resulting from such injuries are not removed by bleaching and consequently affect the appearance of the finished cherry.

Stemming and Pitting. After two weeks the bleaching and hardening of the cherries is complete and they are ready for finishing. They are removed from the solution, rinsed in water and the stems removed. The pits are then taken out

by means of a pitting spoon, a narrow spoon-shaped instrument, the blade of which is inserted through the stem end of the cherry, rotated once around the pit by turning the spoon in one hand and the cherry in the other. The loosened pit is then pulled out through the opening made by the spoon. In case a regular pitting spoon can not be obtained a very acceptable substitute may be made by fastening a heavy hairpin to a small wooden handle in such a manner that a wire loop about one-half inch long is left at the end of the handle. This instrument is used in the same manner as described for the pitting spoon.

Rubber gloves are frequently worn to prevent roughening of the hands through the action of the bleaching liquid while stemming and pitting operations are being performed.

Leaching. The pitted fruit may be leached in two ways. If running water is available a hose or rubber tube is run to the bottom of an earthenware jar or wooden tank in which the fruit is placed, and a very small stream of water allowed to flow for about 24 hours. Stirring the cherries occasionally will facilitate removal of the bleaching solution by the overflowing water. If running water is not at hand the fruit is covered with water (at least two gallons to each gallon of fruit) and allowed to stand twelve hours or longer with an occasional stirring. The water is then drained off, fresh water added and the process repeated three or four times after which the fruit will be ready to dye.

Dyeing. Two types of dye are commonly used for coloring maraschino cherries. The insoluble type is precipitated or "set" in the tissues of fruit so that the color will not leach out or "bleed" and so color other fruits with which the cherries may be used. Erythrosine is the dye used for this purpose and while more time is required to prepare cherries with this dye, this product is much superior in brilliance of color to that prepared with soluble dyes such as Ponceau or Amaranth which also give a red color. The latter two dyes as well as green food dye which is sometimes used are not "set" in the fruit and therefore will color any solution or other food in which the cherries dyed with them may be used.

If erythrosine is used the procedure is as follows: To each gallon of pitted cherries, add 1/16 ounce of erythrosine powder, 1 gallon of water, and 1/2 ounce of baking soda. Heat to simmering for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, then cover and set aside for 24 hours. A wooden float or a dinner plate should be placed on top of the fruit to insure immersion of the cherries in the dye solution. Repeat the heating and let stand another 24 hours, then add one ounce of citric acid, heat and set aside for 48 hours. Stir three or four times during this period. The cherries are then rinsed thoroughly in three changes of warm water to remove all dye particles from the surface and pit cavities, after which they are ready for the addition of syrup.

If any of the soluble dyes such as Ponceau or Amaranth are used, they are added directly to the syrup in the amount required to give the desired color and the dyeing and syruling proceed in one operation. Because of the simplicity of preparation of cherries with the soluble dyes, their use is preferable in many respects to that of erythrosine, as outlined in the preceding paragraphs. If the powdered dye is used, add 1/16 ounce to each gallon of syrup prepared as outlined in the following section. If solutions of the dye are used the amount to add will depend, of course, upon the strength or concentration of the solution purchased. For this reason it is well to exercise care in adding the dye solution

in order that too much may be avoided. If the color is not deep enough it is a simple matter to add more of the dye at any time during the syrupeing process when the soluble dyes are being used.

Syruping. To each gallon of cherries add a gallon of water, 3 pounds of sugar, and $\frac{1}{6}$ ounce of citric acid. Heat to boiling and simmer for about 10 minutes. Cover and set aside for 24 hours. Here, again, a dinner plate or wooden float should be used to keep the cherries immersed in the sugar solution. Repeat the process each day, adding about 1 pound of sugar each time until the syrup is built up to the desired concentration. In general, it will be found that six to eight additions of sugar will be sufficient. If too much sugar is added at one time or if too much water is boiled away, shrinking and wrinkling of the cherries may result which detracts from the appearance of the product.

Flavoring. Dyed cherries are generally flavored with imitation maraschino cherry flavor but if this can not be obtained, almond extract is a very acceptable substitute. Other flavors such as rose, lemon, or grenadine are also used, and for green dyed cherries, mint flavor is frequently added. The amount of flavor required depends upon the strength of the extract used and on the individual taste. A fairly satisfactory method for determining the amount to add is to pour the syrup from the cherries and add double the amount of flavor to the syrup that is acceptable to the individual taste. For example, if it is found that 15 drops of flavor to a gallon of syrup gives the desired effect, then 30 drops will give approximately the same flavor to the finished cherries.

The fruit and flavored syrup are heated to boiling, placed in suitable containers and the containers sterilized in boiling water, the time depending upon the size of container used. It will be found that 30 minutes is sufficient time for pint jars. If erythrosine dye has been used an especially attractive pack may be made by removing the syrup in which the cherries have been built up and using a new syrup made of equal parts by weight of sugar and water to which $\frac{1}{6}$ ounce of citric acid per gallon of syrup and the required amount of flavor has been added. A bright red cherry in clear white syrup is the result. The old syrup which has been removed is entirely suitable to be used for other purposes for which sugar or syrup is desired or it may be used again for the syrupeing of more cherries.

In case the soluble dyes have been used, the syrups are colored and there is no object in packing the cherries in a new syrup.

The following are some of the companies who handle food flavors, dyes and preservers' supplies.

Food Dyes

National Aniline and Chemical Company,
646 N. Thompson Street, Portland, Oregon, or
145 2nd Street, San Francisco, California.

Scientific Supplies Company,
123 Jackson Street, Seattle, Washington.

Food Flavors and Dyes

Gray and Company, 1305 N. W. Davis Street, Portland, Oregon,
S. E. Shaffner Co., 406 N. W. Glisan Street, Portland, Oregon,
Lyons, Magnus Products, San Francisco, California.

Pitting Spoons

Anderson, Barngrover, Manufacturing Company,
512 S. E. Mill Street, Portland, Oregon.

Sodium bi-sulfite, Whiting and Precipitated Chalk

Drug stores or photographic supply houses.

Equivalents of Weights and Measures

1/16 oz. = 1/2 level teaspoonful
1/8 oz. = 1 1/2 level teaspoonfuls
1/2 oz. = 4 level teaspoonfuls
1 pound (sugar) = 1 pint or 2 cupfuls.
