



The Fruit Forager's Companion

Ferments, Desserts, Main Dishes, and More
from Your Neighborhood and Beyond

Sara Bir

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“Foraging for fruit is not going to save the world, but it’s an act that can help make us better people.”

—SARA BIR

The Fruit Forager's Companion is a how-to guide devoted to the secret, sweet bounty just outside our front doors and ripe for the taking. Sara Bir—seasoned chef, gardener, and forager—primes readers on foraging basics, demonstrates gathering and preservation techniques, and shares nearly 100 recipes using familiar fruits from apples and oranges to lesser-known pawpaws and mayhaws.

Written in a witty and welcoming style, Bir believes foraging is a “small act of civil disobedience.” She writes, “Simply looking for wild stuff to eat is a way of flipping the bird to our industrialized food system. It’s a way of asserting our intellectual curiosity and reclaiming our natural role as humans on this planet.”

Bir encourages readers to embrace the magic of hunting for foraged fruit. She equates the “adrenaline rush of unexpected fruit windfalls” to the elation she feels after a “good score at the record store or sighting barely damaged furniture on the curb.” As she puts it, “Some people’s role is to drag home what is unloved and give it a place to belong.” Bir transforms unloved and forgotten fruit into an array of delightful dishes like Lime Pickles, Pawpaw Lemon Curd, and Fermented Cranberry Relish.

The Fruit Forager's Companion is a must-have resource for seekers of both flavor and fun. Check out the reverse side of this page for a sample layout and recipe for Habanero Crab Apple Jelly. You’ll find more information about the author below, and you can read about her cooking insights at www.sausagetarian.com.



Sara Bir is a graduate of The Culinary Institute of America with years of recipe expertise. She creates recipes that draw on her professional skill set, yet are realistic for home cooks. Bir specializes in baking, vegan cooking, charcuterie, and utilizing seasonal ingredients and food on hand in order to curtail food waste at consumer levels. The founding food editor for *Paste Magazine*, Bir has written for *Serious Eats*, *Saveur*, and *MIX*, among other publications, and was featured in the Da Capo Press anthology *Best Food Writing 2014*.

<http://media.chelseagreen.com/the-fruit-foragers-companion>



HABANERO CRAB APPLE JELLY

Makes 3–6 half-pint jars (720 ml–1.4 L)

Crab apples, with their high pectin content, make a luxe and silky jelly. The habanero is optional, but its complex fruity and floral character makes for an interesting jelly that's just as well suited to a grown-up PB&J as it is to accompany cream cheese on a toasted bagel. You could substitute minced fresh jalapeño instead.

5 quarts (1.8 kg) fresh crab apples
Up to 4 cups (800 g) granulated sugar
1–4 habanero peppers, stemmed and
minced (keep the seeds if you like
it very spicy; discard the seeds if
you prefer less heat)

Rinse the crab apples well, then sort through them to remove leaves and small branches. Trim off any bruised spots, but leaving the stems and blossom ends on is fine. Halve the crab apples and put them in a 5- to 6-quart (5 to 6 L) Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed stockpot. Add enough water to cover by an inch (2.5 cm) or so, but not so much that the crab apples are floating all over the place. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer 40 minutes to an hour, until the crab apples are very soft and the liquid is rosy. Remove from the heat.

Transfer to a jelly bag or large colander lined with two layers of cheesecloth set over a large bowl. Strain without disturbing for an hour (don't press out the solids or the final jelly will be cloudy). You should wind up with at least 4 cups of juice. Discard the mushy crab apple solids.

Pour the liquid into the Dutch oven. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, and cook gently for 10 minutes, skimming off any foam with a large metal spoon. Add 1 cup (200 g) sugar for every cup of juice, plus half of the minced peppers, if using. Stir to dissolve. If you have a candy thermometer, clip it on now. Boil gently, periodically skimming off scum as it collects around the rim of the pot. Some of the minced peppers may get skimmed off as you do this, but don't worry; your jelly will still be plenty spicy later.

Cook until the jelly reaches 220°F (105°C) on a candy thermometer or passes the gel test on a chilled plate. This could take up to 45 minutes, so be patient. Add the remaining half of the peppers during the final 10 minutes or so of cooking.

Ladle into sterilized jars, leaving ¼ inch (6 mm) headspace, and process in a water bath canner for 10 minutes. Alternatively, you may cool, seal, and store the jelly in the refrigerator for up to 2 months. The heat level of the jelly may mellow as it ages.

NOTE: Wear gloves when handling habaneros. Otherwise, you'll have to contend with burning hands for the next day or so. Not fun.