

Summer 2020

 fundamentally



Highland berries from Croft 15



Black, red and white currants



Green, pink and black gooseberries

Did you know???? Gooseberries and currants are the same family of plants

Scotland has long been famous for soft fruits. At Croft 15 in Diabaig village, Nicky and Adrian Gear have resurrected a neglected croft and have a large berry orchard bringing the land back into a sustainable use.

The location is perfect for these native types of berries ... cool summers, abundant rainfall and virtually frost free. This microclimate is due to the warming influence of the Atlantic gulf stream, some protection from Atlantic storms from the Isle of Syke just opposite and peaty, rich damp soil at the right acidity. The orchard faces south to maximise those elusive Scottish sunny days.

Being so far north, in mid-summer, the peak growth period the days are long ...20 hours. This is an unspoiled part of the world and there are abundant insect pollinators (and an abundant wild bird population as a result). No fertilisers or pesticides have ever been used.

Not just for tarts..... cocktails, sauces, marinades and pickles

Traditionally used for desserts, jams and fools, modern chefs are increasingly using these naturally tart berries for savoury dishes. They have spotted the opportunity to use them for acid balance with non-citrus British alternatives.

*The major acid in citrus fruits is citric acid (hence the name). **Blackcurrants and red currants** have 1-3% citric acid but also malic acid (the major acid of apples), tartaric acid (the major acid of black grapes which converts to tannins in wine), and some oxalic acid (a major acid of rhubarb). These various fruit acid combinations in berries lead to the differing fruity aromas and flavours.*

The acidity can be harnessed for marinades, for example; raw scallops marinated with red currant juice. The acid lightly poaches the scallop and the redcurrant acidity sets off the natural sweetness of the scallop. And of course, the classic Cumberland sauce is made with redcurrants. Many rhubarb recipes can use native berries when rhubarb season ends.

The acidity can also be used as pickling element, and many Nordic recipes can be found with berries used for this purpose. Also great for palate cleansing sorbets... are these still a thing?



Rowan berries



Blueberries ripening



Grower Nicky Gear, nuts about berries

Healthy, healthy, healthy

Who remembers hot blackcurrant juice when you had a cold? Reason is the high vitamin C content (vitamin C is citric acid). It's 2.5 times the required daily dose. Blueberries have become very popular, their reputation as a superfood no doubt due to the large variety of fruit acids found in them - 11 in total.

Blueberries grow wild in Scotland (called blaeberrys), but Croft 15 cultivated them and produce lovely fat juicy berries

Rowan berries. Rowan trees are abundant in the highlands and grow wild. They all ripen at the same time so traditionally they have been preserved as rowan jelly and usually served with venison.

They are extremely astringent/bitter when raw and must be cooked. The bitter element is transformed into a less bitter acid when cooked. Often said to be rather like cranberries. Widely used in Nordic cuisine.

Note about the author.. Brought up in Aberdeenshire, we free roaming children would climb trees and pick bunches of rowan berries for the Baxters jam factory. We got paid one penny a bunch. How times a have changed!

Availability is in the 10's of kilos, not 100's so you need to let us know if you are interested and we will let you know as soon as they are ready to get an order in.

Rough timings depending on weather:

White currants... All gone, sorry

Black and red currants : from now until end August

Green and pink gooseberries: end of July

Black gooseberries : end July through August

Blueberries : August till end September

Rowan berries : harvested once, towards end of August



Are you up for a berry feast
this summer?

Call Sue on **01264 811170**

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