

BLUEBERRY CRISP

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

Like Violet Beauregarde from “Wilie Wonka & the Chocolate Factory,” I’ve rarely met a blueberry I haven’t liked. Blueberries are in the same plant family as cranberries and huckleberries and are native to North America. In season from late June through September in the Northwest, they freeze quite well.

Part of the charm of any blueberry is to handpick it. Thankfully, blueberry bushes are thornless, and you don’t have to compete with bears for the harvest (huckleberries, I’m looking at you.) I’ve spent many pleasant afternoons harvesting berries with my mother at U-pick farms. When we reach the checkout stand, I always request they charge me for additional berry weight based on my inability to refrain from eating them right off the bush. I know this is frowned upon, but I’m incorrigible.

While fresh blueberries are delicious, my favorite way to eat them is in a rustic fruit dessert. It won’t surprise anyone that a rustic fruit dessert has grandmotherly charm, my No. 1 dessert criteria. But it quite frequently has an entertaining name as well. A crumble, cobbler and crisp are familiar, but there is also a pandowdy, a slump, a grunt, a sonker and a fool. To clarify, a fool is a rustic fruit dessert, not the author in this particular case.

Rustic fruit desserts celebrate the bounty of the season in a simple and unfussy format. While they delight me during summer, I delight in a rustic fruit dessert made later in the year from berries frozen at their peak. And if it’s a blueberry, it excites me even more.

Blueberry crisp

Adapted from Julie Richardson, serves 6 to 8

A crisp is different from a crumble in that its brown sugar streusel topping contains oatmeal that crisps during baking. Either way is delicious, particularly spread over a bed of blueberries and sugar with a hint of citrus. Serve with vanilla ice cream if you wish.

Crisp topping

- 1 1/2 cups old fashioned oats



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A hearty blueberry crisp, served with a side of vanilla ice cream.

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup brown sugar, gently packed
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 10 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Fruit filling

- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 6 1/2 cups blueberries, fresh or frozen
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit and butter a 2 quart baking dish. Mix together the oats, flour, brown sugar, and salt in a medium bowl. Stir in the melted butter and press together with your hands until it forms small clumps. Put the crisp topping in the freezer while you assemble the filling.

Mix together the sugar, corn starch and salt in a large bowl. Add the blueberries and toss to combine, then gently stir in the lemon juice. Finally, spoon the fruit mixture

into the prepared baking dish.

Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, or until the crisp is golden brown and the filling is bubbling up in the corners. Cool for 15 to 20 minutes before serving.

Brian Medford is the owner of Idlewild Biscuits and Bakes in Astoria and delights in Southern cooking. He is a staff instructor at The Pantry in Seattle. Contact him at blmedford@gmail.com.

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