

Cheery cherries checked

Jenny Garing, linguist, traveller, gourmet, teacher, and the creative force behind Ground Essentials food products, answers Zest readers' culinary questions.



Glacé cherries: They are boiled in sugar syrup for up to two weeks, and the colour is artificial.

Is it best to keep stone fruit in or out of the fridge?

A lot of fruit in supermarkets is sold under-ripe and you cannot finish the ripening process in the refrigerator. To ripen stone fruit like peaches, apricots and nectarines, place them in a sunny spot, like a windowsill, with their tops facing down. They can stay in the full sun like that for a few days, or until soft. Sunlight activates the natural sugars in the fruit to complete the ripening process. Keep an eye on them, as they can go from nearly ripe to spoiled very quickly. Once they are soft or ripe, transfer them to the fridge until you are ready to eat them. However, I think that the flavour of the fruit is better if eaten at room temperature.



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the candying process. The cherries are pitted and then soaked in a sulphur dioxide mixture to preserve them. They are then leached to remove the sulphur dioxide, drained and put into a sugar syrup where they are boiled repeatedly over 8 - 14 days in increasingly concentrated

sugar. They are candied in the process as a way of preventing spoilage due to fungal infection or bacteria. Red food colouring (E127) is added during this process as the cherries lose any colour they had. They are then drained and dried for use.

If, you are not keen on sulphur dioxide or red food colouring in your food, have a go at making your own glacé cherries. You will need eight days to go through the process and it will use a lot of sugar. The end result will not keep as well as mass-produced glacé cherries. Try this recipe from the internet that has a short or long version <http://www.ellenskitchen.com/pantry/glacéed.html>. And, James Martin's *Desserts* book has a good recipe.

Is ghee just butter that has been melted and the fat skimmed away? If I do this at home will it be the same as shop-bought ghee?

Clarified butter is the purest form of butter fat and is made by bringing melted butter to a simmer and then letting it stand until the milk solids separate from the clear butter fat. This butter fat (clarified butter) floats to the surface and is poured off for use in cooking. Ghee is one form of clarified butter. It is made by simmering the butter until all of the moisture has evaporated and the milk solids have browned slightly which gives the butter a subtle nutty caramel flavour and aroma. This simmering also gives the ghee a longer shelf life and

allows it to reach a higher smoking point than normal clarified butter. The main advantage in using ghee in cooking is that it can be heated to very high temperatures without burning, just like oil, while imparting a buttery flavour. To make at home melt 100g of unsalted butter and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes or until the milk solids have browned slightly and there is a nutty aroma. Remove pan from the heat and allow it to cool. Pour the top layer of fat into a glass jar, cover it and put in the fridge. Discard the milk solids in the pan (or feed it to your chickens). This makes about ¼ cup of ghee, which will still be a little different in texture to store-bought ghee.

■ Email questions to jenny@ground.co.nz

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