



The Fragrant Pantry: Floral-Scented Jams, Jellies and Liqueurs

Frances Bissell

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Bissell's book offers an in-depth look at creating and storing all sorts of fruit and floral products, complete with savory dish suggestions, creative pairings, and a compelling and interesting narrative.

The Fragrant Pantry is a comprehensive cookbook written for the forager, experimenter, and at-home chef. Frances Bissell is an obvious expert in the kitchen, and demonstrates her years of experience and experimentation with every recipe and instruction in this book.

From jams to jellies, marmalades, mostardas, and mincemeat, Bissell covers a wide range of delicious recipes in an easy-to-follow format. She makes creating beautiful and tasty condiments accessible to even a novice cook.

The Fragrant Pantry focuses on using flowers in traditional recipes for jams, jellies, and marmalades, as well as on more unique flavor combinations in ketchups, chutneys, and pickles. Unusual offerings, such as a fennel pickled walnut recipe, are enticing.

The majority of these recipes come with a short anecdote relating Bissell's inspiration for their specific flavor profiles and recipes, and a brief history of their ingredients and combinations. Weather, climate, seasons, and location are all important factors in the availability and freshness of her ingredients, and she stresses the importance of these aspects and how they affect each recipe differently.

When foraging and cooking with unfamiliar ingredients, safety is crucial. Bissell touches on the safety of each ingredient, and what to look for if there is any confusion; but when it comes to accidental poisoning, further research of flowers and fruits is strongly recommended. These beautiful floral dishes beg to be photographed, but the book lacks that visual aspect, which might also aid in the differentiation of edible versus inedible fruits and flowers.

Bissell covers recipes completely from beginning to end, starting with what fruit and flower to use, when to use it, and why, and saying which type of pan to cook in, which type of jar to store in, and everything in between. Her knowledge of details such as pectin levels, fruit tannins, and product spoilage, while seemingly unimportant to the amateur cook, is essential for the safe creation of these delicious, beautiful treats.

The Fragrant Pantry is about more than just making jams and jellies; it is an in-depth look at creating and storing all sorts of fruit and floral products, complete with savory dish suggestions, creative pairings, and a compelling and interesting narrative.

KATIE ASHER (January/February 2018)

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