



Sloe Gin

Sloes are the blue-black fruits of the Blackthorn, they have a sharp, sour taste. Although not suitable for baking in a pie or for jam making, they do make excellent Sloe Gin.

Tradition says that Sloes should only be picked after the first frost. In the days before freezers this would have been a sensible approach, as freezing the fruits causes the skin to rupture, allowing the juices to be released, eliminating the need to prick each fruit with a pin (or thorn). Now – a - days, waiting until the first frost generally means that all the sloes have been already been harvested by non-traditional Townies. To simulate the first frost, simply put your sloes in a container and place them in the freezer for 24 to 48 hours.

To make Sloe Gin:

If you are going onto a farm or private property, ask permission before you start picking. Don't forget that Sloes are a good winter food for birds and mammals, so leave some behind – don't ever strip a bush bare.

Pick some Sloes. You will need 500 grams (17 Oz) to make a litre of Sloe Gin. Remove the stalks and wash. Allow the Sloes to dry before placing in the freezer for 24 to 48 hours.

Into a large sterilised jar, add 500 grams (17 Oz) of the prepared Sloes and pour in 1 litre of Gin. The better quality the Gin, the better the product will be.

At this point you can add 250 grams of white sugar, or you might prefer to wait and add a sugar syrup at a later stage.

Seal the jar and store in a cool, dark place for 3 months. Give the jar a shake every 2 or 3 days.

After three months, strain the Gin through muslin or a coffee filter.

If using the sugar syrup method, add 3 parts sugar to 2 parts water to a pan. Over a low heat stir until the sugar has dissolved. Allow the syrup to cool and slowly add to the Sloe Gin, keep testing the mixture until the desired sweetness is attained.

Pour the Sloe Gin into sterilised bottles and seal. Remember to label the bottles.

The Sloe Gin can be drunk immediately but will improve with age.

This recipe can also be used for Damson or Bullace Gin.

Four Square, The Man In His Shed.