



### Hawthorn and Crab Apple Fruit Leathers

Celebrating the abundance of Autumn is a wonderful seasonal thing to do. By making fruit leathers out of ripe, red Hawthorn Berries and Crab Apples, we can preserve their yummy nutrition for Winter months ahead.

#### Ages

6+

#### Duration:

- This activity can be done with a group in 3 hours if there is good focus and you're making a relatively small batch.

#### How To

- If you're making your fruit leather over a fire, it could be best to light your fire before going foraging for the fruits and berries so it has a good amount of time to get established.
- Gather ripe Hawthorn Berries (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Crab Apples (*Malus sylvestris*) from local, abundant trees.
- Wash the fruit in a bowl of water (or running tap if at home).
- Sort the Hawthorn Berries so that most stalks are removed and only the healthy looking ones are put into the pot and any that look damaged or past their best are discarded, being gifted perhaps to the birds.
- Quarter the Crab Apples and add all the healthy looking ones to the pot
- Place the pot over a fire and add just enough hot water to cover the fruit (if making out in the woods, it's helpful to bring a flask of hot water to speed up the process).
- Simmer until the fruit is soft and squishy. You can now take the lid off to help some of the water evaporate and thicken your mixture.
- Mash the fruit to make a paste.
- Add sugar to taste.
- Use a spoon to push the paste through a sieve, discarding the roughage, pips and bits of skin too large to pass through.
- You can put the paste back into a clean pot and heat more to drive off more moisture. This will decrease the drying time. You want to aim for it to be thick enough that you can see the base of the pan when you pull a spoon through the mixture (this of course somewhat depends on how much is in your pan - but hopefully it gives a hint as to how thick you want it).

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- Spread the paste thinly on a lightly oiled surface that can be heated to dehydrate the paste. If at home it's likely easiest to spread onto greaseproof paper on an oven tray. The paste should be thin but thick enough that it is opaque.
- Heat the paste to dehydrate - here we show using an up-turned dutch oven lid over embers of our fire as well as the variation of at home in an oven (60-80 degrees celsius or around 140 degrees fahrenheit). If you heat the paste too hot or too long it will become brittle. You are aiming to be able to touch the surface without it feeling tacky but for the fruit leather to still be flexible.
- You can then slice it up to share and enjoy.
- If storing it, you need to put it in a moisture free, air-tight container such as a clean, dry jar or freezer bag. This can then be kept in a cool dark place at room temperature for 2-4 weeks or we recommend freezing if you want to store it for longer.

### Equipment Needed

- Fruit - hawthorn berries and crab apples
- Hot Water (in a thermos if making in the field)
- Sugar
- Foraging bags or baskets
- Bowl and water to wash fruit
- Pot
- Trivet
- Fire Gloves
- Chopping boards
- Knives
- Masher
- Mixing spoon
- Sieve
- Jar
- Extra Bowl
- Extra Pot
- Dutch oven lid and a dab of coconut oil OR oven tray and greaseproof paper
- Fire Lighting equipment and decent wood supply if making out in the field

### Variations

- The principles of making fruit leather apply to other fruits so you can experiment with all sorts of recipes. However both Hawthorn Berries and Apples are relatively high in pectin and so are great to help it hold together well.

### Teacher Tricks and Tips

- As you're gathering the berries and processing them, it is a lovely opportunity to share anecdotal stories or information about the Hawthorn tree's gifts. For example you can share about how the medicine of the Hawthorn tree is wonderful for bringing health and balance to the circulation system and the heart.

### Invisible Learning

- Connection to the Hawthorn and Crab Apple trees
- Understanding a way of preserving fruit
- Processing a wild food for eating

### Hazards to Highlight

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- Identification of wild foods
- Potential burns from cooking on the fire

### **Risk Assessment Considerations**

These are the risk assessment consideration documents to be referred to for this activity.

- Safe Tool Use
- Fire Related Activities
- Plant Related Activities
- Site risk assessment (specific to your site)

### **Links**

- Hawthorn Song, Hawthorn Syrup, Cinnamon Sugar Autumn Apples, Other wild foods

### **Tags**

- Foraging, Hawthorn, Crab Apples, Fruit Leather, Cooking, Wild Food, Berries

