

Whirl and Sip

By Suzanne Carreiro

You can buy smoothies at lots of places, including the grocery store. But you have a lot more control over fruit quality, as well as sugar and fat content, when you make them at home. Besides, they taste better. Right now at the St. Helena Farmers Market, vendors are selling organic peaches, apricots, plums, and berries—all perfect ingredients for smoothies. In fact, many growers offer boxes of fruit—sometimes at bargain prices. I like to freeze fruit at its peak during the summer so I have high quality, organic fruit to use in smoothies whenever I'm in the mood. Using frozen fruit in smoothies makes them really fruity and thick because there is less ice and more fruit. It's also a way to make sure that all the fruit you buy gets eaten (not left on the counter and ignored).

To Freeze Fruit: Peel it first and cut it into bite-size pieces. Berries need to be rinsed and drained on paper towels. Bananas, peaches, and pears need a dip in 1/2 cup water mixed with 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Place the fruit on a sheet pan in a single layer, spaced about 1/4-inch apart. They're firm and ready to use or put into freezer bags within an hour.

The recipe for *Blueberry Peach Smoothie* uses nonfat milk—whirled with ripe summer fruits and ice. The milk provides a neutral background so the luscious fruit flavors stand out. The Lemon-Lime Slush, also made with nonfat milk, is a cross between fresh lemonade and lime sherbet. Slurp, slurp!

Blueberry Peach Smoothie

Add a splash of orange liqueur for an icy dessert.

2 cups peeled and sliced ripe peaches (frozen 20 minutes)

1 basket (6 ounces) blueberries (frozen 20 minutes)

1-1/2 cups nonfat milk

1/2 cup ice cubes

1/2 cup tropical juice blend (100% fruit juice)

1 tablespoon sugar (optional)

Instructions: Place all ingredients in a blender container. Cover and blend on high until smooth, stopping to stir as needed. Serve immediately. **Makes 4 servings.**

Lemon-Lime Slush

There is no substitute for the fresh lemon and lime juices.

2-1/2 cups ice cubes

1-1/4 cups nonfat milk

1/3 to 1/2 cup sugar

1/3 cup fresh lemon juice (about 2 lemons), chilled

1/4 cup fresh lime juice (about 2 limes), chilled

Instructions: Place all ingredients in a blender container. Cover and blend on high until smooth, stopping to stir as needed. Serve immediately. **Makes 3 servings.**

Suzanne Carreiro is a food and wine consultant and cooking teacher in St. Helena. She is finishing a travel memoir/cookbook after living in Italy's Umbria region for a year. The book will be available in 2009. She can be contacted at suzanne@cookwithclass.com.