

Seasonal treat: rowan

Quick, before the birds get them!



At this time of year, and particularly this year, the Rowan, or Mountain ash, trees are laden with clusters of bright orange or red berries. Like the sloe, rowan berries are better after the first frost has been, as it helps to reduce their bitterness. This can be simulated by putting the berries into a freezer for a few days though, so there's no excuse for waiting too long for a frost, and seeing the birds devour your potential haul!

Rowan berries are very rich in sorbic acid which is an antimicrobial agent, often used in food and drink preparation to inhibit the growth of mould and fungi. Not very palatable raw, the berries are best made into the slightly bitter jelly, for which they are best known, as an accompaniment to game dishes; or jams – usually mixed with other fruit. In Scandinavia rowan is also used to flavour schnapps.

Scotland is very strongly associated with the rowan in Britain, and in Gaelic it is called 'caorann', or rudha-a, meaning 'red one'. There is a new speciality gin on the market, called Caorunn, which has rowan as one of its ingredients.

Rowan vodka



½ litre vodka
500g rowan berries
Sugar syrup

METHOD

Pick and wash the berries, then put into the freezer for at least 3-4 days. Take the vodka and put into a 1litre bottle, then tip in the frozen berries. Seal and allow to sit in a cool, dark place for at least three months. Invert the bottle every day for the first week or so.

When is it time, strain the berries out and add sugar syrup to taste. You may need quite a lot!

You can also do this with brandy or gin.



This select new gin includes rowan in its ingredients.