

Grape of the South

Dating back several centuries, the first American grape cultivar was the bronze variety of muscadine called scuppernong, named after the North Carolina area in which it was found. Depending on who you talk to, you will get very different opinions on the scuppernong's relationship to the bullis, or dark fruited muscadine. In fact, both varieties may be correctly called muscadine.

Today muscadines are commonly used in jams, jellies, and wines. The pulp and hulls can also be used in breads, cakes, and pies. Here are some harvesting tips to make your muscadine season a success.

For extracting juice, making jams, or desserts look for these varieties: Albemarle, Beta, Carlos, Concord, Fredonia, Golden, Isles, Jumbo, Hunt, Magnolia, Nevermiss, Noble, Pamlico, Welder, and Van Buren.

Look for fully mature berries. Mature berries will come off the vine without tearing. Immature berries will tear and have a wet stem scar.

Harvest over a long period of time. Muscadines will ripen over several weeks. Harvesting all at once will greatly reduce the yield of fully mature berries.

Once you have your berries in hand, try this recipe!

Muscadine Preserves, Jam

5 pounds muscadines
10 cups sugar

Cook seedless muscadines: De-seed by pressing grapes between fingers. Pulp will pop out, leaving hulls. You can de-seed several quarts in a short time. Cook hulls, and use for sauce or preserves. For jam, chop hulls before cooking; for preserves, leave whole. Heat pulp, simmer for about 5 minutes and then force through a colander to remove seeds. Use the pulp for jam or butter. Add ½ cup juice from cooked hulls to the pulp to give color.

Cook hulls and pulp over low heat until hulls are tender, about 15 minutes. Time will vary according to muscadine variety. Add sugar to simmering mixture and stir to dissolve. Cook until mixture is done (gels when put in the freezer for a few minutes). Remove jam or preserves from heat while you are performing the doneness test.

Pour into sterilized jelly jars to within ¼ inch of top. Remove air bubbles, wipe jar rims, and adjust lids. Process for 5 minutes (pints) or 10 minutes (quarts) in a boiling water bath canner. Remove from water and cool.

For more recipes utilizing fresh Alabama Produce contact your Local County Extension Office or contact Angela Treadaway Regional Agent for Food Safety, Preservation and Preparation at 205-410-3696