S e . , am le, if li , is a plant in the lily family, known in Alaska as "watermelon berry." Other common names include "twisted stalk" and "wild cucumber." e names may come from the unique "kinked" stalk that bears the berry, the cucumber avor of the shoots and the watermelon avor and color of the ripe fruit. *S e . ,* species prefer cool, shady and damp growing conditions and can be found throughout the continental United States and Canada. Watermelon berries are common in Alaska along the coast from Southeast Alaska north to the central Yukon River area at Manley Hot Springs and in damp wooded areas of Interior Alaska.

e plants grow from 1 to 3½ feet high and have branching stems. e oval leaves are 2 to 5 inches long, broadest toward the base, and grow in an alternate pattern. Flowers are bell-shaped, pinkish or greenish, and hang from a slender stalk in the axil of the leaves. Ripe watermelon berries are slightly oblong, very juicy and are light to deep red, although some varieties produce yellowish-white or orange berries. e shoots may be confused with two other lily family plants that may occasionally be found in similar habitats — false Solomon's seal and false hellebore. e latter of these, false hellebore, is poisonous, so positive identi cation is necessary before using roots, stems, leaves or berries.

In the spring, Alaskans enjoy and prize the young, tender shoots of the plant for their fresh cucumberlike avor. e shoots can be eaten in salads or cooked with other fresh greens. Perfectly ripe, plump berries have a lightly sweet watermelonlike avor and make excellent jelly, syrups and juice. ey can also be used as an extender with other berries. ough it is tempting to eat all the berries while picking, watermelon berries contain seeds that are reputed to be somewhat laxative, and some allergies to this berry have been reported, so use caution when trying them for the rst time.

Storage and Preservation

How to Clean and Store

of sugar all at once. Again, bring to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and quickly skim o foam. Immediately pour hot jelly into hot canning jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Wipe jars rims and add prepared two-piece lids. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water bath.

Yield: 5-6 c

References

Pojar, Jim and Andy Mackinnon. 1994.

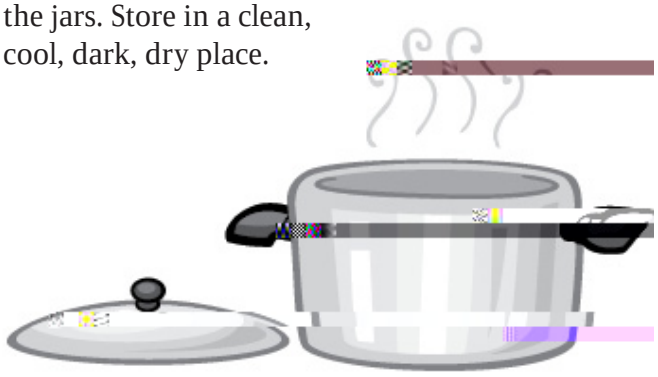
To process in a boiling water canner, follow these steps:

Fill the canner halfway with water. Preheat water to a low boil. Place lled jars, tted with lids, into the canner on the rack. Add more boiling water, if needed, so the water level is at least 1 inch above jar tops. Turn heat to its highest position until water boils vigorously. When the water boils, set a timer for the recommended processing time indicated in the recipe. Cover with the canner lid and lower heat setting to maintain a gentle boil throughout the processing time. Add more boiling water, if needed, to keep the water level above the jars.

When the jars have been boiled for the recommended time, turn o the heat and remove the canner lid. Using a jar li er, remove the jars and place them on a towel, leaving at least 1 inch of space between the jars during cooling.

A er cooling jars for 12 to 24 hours, remove the screw bands and test seals. Press the middle of the lid with a nger. If the lid springs up when nger is released, the lid is unsealed. If a lid fails to seal on a jar, remove the lid and check the jar-sealing surface for tiny nicks. If necessary, change the jar, add a new, properly prepared lid and reprocess within 24 hours using the same processing time. Alternately, adjust headspace to 1½ inches and freeze, or store in the refrigerator and use within three days.

If lids are tightly sealed on cooled jars, remove screw bands, wash the lid and jar to remove food residue, then rinse and dry jars. Label and date the jars. Store in a clean, cool, dark, dry place.



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