

meet your maker



money for jam

NO ADDITIVES, NO PRESERVATIVES, ALL NATURAL AND JUST LIKE HOME-MADE... BUT TE HORO JAM DOES HAVE ONE SECRET INGREDIENT

WORDS ANNA TAIT-JAMIESON
PHOTOGRAPHS DANIEL ALLEN & NICOLA EDMONDS



THREE KILOS OF FRUIT plus three kilos of sugar. That's the simple equation behind every batch of jam which leaves Te Horo Foods' kitchen on the Kapiti Coast. No secrets there; it's a recipe familiar to anyone who's ever wielded a big wooden spoon. But it does take some doing to consistently turn out commercial quantities of jam which meets all the specs yet still tastes as if it's been made at home.

In a sense, Kate and Tim Gibbs do just that. Their jam kitchen is just a short stroll from their home among the orchards of Stanmore Farm. It's a family farm; Kate's parents, Graeme and Chris Sharp, live on the property and her brother Geoff has a house tucked into the hills. Graeme, a Wellington doctor, bought the land in the 1970s as a weekend retreat. It was a Hereford stud in those days but his interest was horticulture so he shifted the cattle and planted a succession of crops before finally settling on pears and blackberries.

Neither crop was intended for jam. Kate says the jam business began quite by chance at a time when the farm was stuck with a surfeit of berries. "We had last year's fruit in the freezer and a new crop coming on, which we had no hope of selling, so did we pick or not? Then Dad saw a little article in the paper about a man making raspberry jam and selling it at the Nelson market."

OPPOSITE: The jam-maker's trick – a dab of butter prevents foaming; blackberry picker Aukusitino Tiitii. THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT: Orchard manager Pat Heskett with picker Jenni Kilpatrick. ABOVE: Tim and Kate Gibbs in the pear orchard at the end of a perfect growing season with just enough rain and weeks of warm, sunny weather.



Chris and Graeme Sharp.



That was the opening which got them out of one jam and into another. They began making jam for Anathoth, an arrangement which lasted until that business was sold and the family decided to go it alone. Their own range of jams, branded Te Horo, was launched into Foodstuffs' supermarkets 18 months ago. Since then total production has increased to 95 tonnes per annum and the jams have picked up a New Zealand Food Award, impressing the judges as true-to-fruit products which "could grace the shelves of any pantry, masquerading as home-made".

Their success is largely due to the efforts of Tim and Kate who also run the orchards and the grapevine nursery which is the mainstay of the farm business. Kate set up the nursery when she returned to live on the farm in 1994. A highly regarded viticulturist, she is also credited with establishing the country's newest wine appellation, Ohau Gravels, on the stony river terraces south of Levin.

She says the terroir on the home farm is the complete opposite – no good for wine but particularly suited to blackberries. "The soil is very deep and fertile and we have a temperate climate. There's also something about the light. It's the quality of the light and the temperature that produce the flavour. We have these lovely long days and at the end of the season, when the nights are cooler, the berries become even sweeter."

Stanmore is one of the country's biggest blackberry growers with 10 hectares of vines and more going in. The harvest begins over summer and continues well into autumn as the berries ripen. All the fruit is handpicked but the canes are thornless so there are no scratches, just stained fingers for the team of pickers and the Gibbs' three children who pitch in to help over the school holidays.

Most of the 70-tonne blackberry crop is sold directly to the produce markets – along with all the pears from the orchard – but 20 percent is reserved for jam. Tim says only the best goes into the pan. "We don't go through and grade out the good fruit for market and use the rest for our jam. The fruit quality is a big part of the taste." The apricots, raspberries, grapefruit, strawberries and plums which complete the jam range are grown elsewhere in New Zealand but the same rigour applies.

Tim runs the jam kitchen with four full-time staff. An engineer by profession, he takes a systematic approach to the job. "I'm probably a bit pedantic but with jam you have to be like that. You can't take short cuts. It's individually batch-made so you do get variation. The cooking time depends on the time of day and the atmospheric pressure and that's where the judgement of the cook comes in."

The cooks are chosen for their home-jam-making skills. The current pair refers to themselves as the "little jam tarts", but it's obvious they know what they're doing. Patrolling the rows of preserving pans with a spoon in each hand, they stop to stir the fruit, check the colour, adjust the simmer and calculate the exact time to pour in the sugar. That, and a dab of butter – the old jam-makers' trick – are all that go in. With no additives to cover for inconsistencies in the process, things can go wrong. When they do, Kate calls in the expert. "We bring Mum down. She may try a batch in her kitchen and she'll say you have to do this, that or the other."

And there you have it – the secret ingredient that's not on the label and the reason this jam really does taste home-made. Te Horo Foods has a resident grandma, complete with jam-splattered apron and big wooden spoon.



Jam kitchen manager Gill Tusooson.



APRICOT CHICKEN DRUMSTICKS

Kate adapts this recipe to use as a ham glaze with apricot jam, Dijon mustard and a dash of whisky.

- 12 chicken drumsticks
- 1½ cups Te Horo apricot jam
- ½ cup Dijon mustard
- ½ cup white wine vinegar

Preheat oven to 180°C. Place drumsticks in a resealable plastic bag or lidded container. Blend jam,

mustard and vinegar until smooth. Reserve half a cup of mixture to use as a dipping sauce. Pour remainder over drumsticks and marinate in fridge for up to 2 hours.

Place chicken on a rack above a baking tray lined with baking paper. Roast in the middle of the oven for approximately 40 minutes, turning once during cooking time. Serve with reserved dipping sauce. *Serves 6*

JAM DROPS

These lovely little biscuits are quick and easy to make.

- 180g softened butter
- 1 cup caster sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 cups plain flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- Te Horo raspberry or blackberry jam

Preheat oven to 180°C. Line an oven tray with baking paper.

Beat butter and sugar in a bowl until pale and creamy. Add

egg and beat until combined, then stir in flour and baking powder and mix to a dough.

Roll dough into walnut-sized balls and flatten onto the baking tray. Press a finger into the middle of each to make an indent and fill with jam.

Bake 10 minutes or until golden. Place on wire racks and add a little more jam while still hot. Leave on racks to cool. *Makes about 24 biscuits*



QUEEN PUDDING

This old-fashioned pudding can be made with raspberry, boysenberry or blackberry jam.

- 400ml milk
- 100g fresh white breadcrumbs
- 25g butter
- 75g caster sugar
- 4 eggs, separated
- 150g Te Horo jam

Preheat oven to 200°C. Warm milk over low heat until it starts to bubble. Turn off heat and add breadcrumbs, butter and half the sugar. Leave to stand for about 15 minutes then add lightly beaten egg yolks. Pour mixture into a greased baking dish and bake for 30-35 minutes or until golden. Remove from oven and spread jam over the top. Whisk egg whites and remaining sugar until stiff; spoon over pudding. Bake for a further 15 minutes until meringue topping is set and golden-brown. Serve with home-made custard. *Serves 4*