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Jellies for the farm fair

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New Jersey has been very sweltering this summer, which has made gardening a big chore rather then a delight.
As usual, like years previous the farm fair opens in the latter end of July. I had pondered if this year would be a year I wouldn't enter my herbal and fruit jellies. As the days came closer, my dear friend Fran called and gave me more encouragement to enter. "Please," she said.

Fran said, "Jeannie you are the only one that enters unique jellies and jam's that make the judges stand back and think." She said, with out your eclectic mixtures, the rest are just run of the mill, blue berry, strawberry, apple etc". With Fran's encouragement, it did get my creative ideas flowing. However, I also pondered the words,"eclectic" and the meaning of that word.

On a hot July day I revamped my creative self and set a path to making herbal and fruit jellies. Out to the grocery store to buy sugar, jars, pectin and over ripened fruit. It was blueberry season in New Jersey, so my first jam was Blueberry and Lemon Thyme, it came out wonderfully. Next came a Orange and Rosemary Jelly(awesome on grilled chicken). After a day of making two cases of each type of jelly, on a 100 degree day- with no A/C. It was time to rest.

The next day my mind was racing about "what" could I make next. A friend had left a big bottle of Merlot wine, I don't drink wine, so I felt it was time to do something interesting with the left overs. I heated the wine slowly and added 4 big sprigs of fresh Rosemary and let steep for an hour. Then followed the process on the pectin container, this jelly is wonderful on rye crackers or with some rare roast beef. Two cases of the Merlot and Rosemary will make fine Christmas gifts this year.

Morning three, found me looking in my garden for more ideas. I was harvesting some hot peppers and thought, a nice hot pepper jelly would be fun. Then a Thai theme came to mind. I made a tea of lemon grass and Thai basil. I let it steep for 3 hours to get all the good flavors out of the herbs. I chopped up some hot peppers and proceeded to make a hot pepper jelly with lemon grass and Thai basil tea mixture. I knew this would ~rock the socks~ off the judges.

On a stinking hot, hot, hot, day in July, I drove my products to enter them in the farm fair. My friend Fran, was waiting at the entry table with a big smile, even in the 100 degree heat. Fran said,"I knew you would not let us down." As I filled out my entry cards, Fran just enjoyed telling everyone "this is my friend Jeannie, she is an herbalist and Master Gardener." Folks gathered as they saw my eclectic mixtures of jellies and jam's and commenting on the variety A local newspaper reporter interviewed me and asked "where do you get your idea's for your mixtures". My reply," from my garden, early in the morning as it whispers to me."

My gifts that came from my garden enabled me to win 4 blue ribbons. The heat of this summers garden season as taught me many lessons, but also rewarded me in so many ways. In the sweltering sweaty heat of this year, I still came out a winner!

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