

Guidelines for picking organic forest berries



What does organic mean?

Before picking organic berries, you should read these guidelines carefully – you will also be asked to sign a written consent that you will follow the guidelines. The buyer of the berries is responsible for supplying pickers with the necessary instructions on how to pick organic berries. You can commit yourself to picking organically at berry purchase points by giving the signed consent to the buyer.

More and more organically manufactured food products are marketed to health and environmentally conscious consumers. The Finnish word for ‘organic’ is ‘luomu’, short for ‘luonnonmukainen’ (meaning natural). Organic food production takes into account the environment, the animals and the rural community as well as the consumers. The goal is to produce organic food products that are tasty, healthy, natural in composition and of high quality.

Berries, whether farmed or wild-growing, can also be organic. Consumers can buy these berries as they are or the berries may be processed further into organic food products.

The authorities supervise the entire production chain of organic forest berries and other wild natural products all the way from forest owners to buyers and food manufacturers. Once a company or picking area is labelled organic, the authorities will conduct a formal inspection at least once a year. This is to ensure that consumers can trust in the food products fulfilling all necessary standards of quality. Pickers do not have to join the organic control system.

A picker must commit to the instructions in writing and pick only from designated areas

Organic forest berries may only be picked from designated areas that have been approved by the organic production control system. Berries picked from organic picking areas must be kept separate from other berries.

Berry buyers have maps of picking areas approved by the organic control system. Pickers may request a copy of the map. Organic picking areas are typically marked in the map bordered by estates and roads. The way of marking the organic picking area may vary between locations and you should always ensure that you understand the markings on a given map. Approved picking areas must be marked clearly on the map, for example with a different colour or by rasterisation.

It is not allowed to pick organic forest berries from fields and other cultivated areas, yards and gardens or forest pastures where domestic animals are kept.

Berries may not be picked near roads or fields

It is not allowed to pick berries on the side of the road because the berries will be covered in dust coming from the road. You must leave a space of a 100 metres or more to the road if the road has a lot of traffic and 10–50 metres for smaller sideroads. 10 metres is enough for a small, dust-free forest motor road if there is enough vegetation on the side of the road to catch any dust. For village roads and more dusty forest roads you should leave a space of 50 metres or more. It is important to pay attention to not picking dusty berries since the dust may contain a large amount of impurities. If picking near an ordinarily cultivated field, you should leave an adequate space, such as 10 metres, between the field and where you pick to avoid pesticide residue. Food control authorities may take samples of the batches pickers have supplied to ensure that the berries fulfil the criteria specified for organic food products.

Substances prohibited in organic picking areas

Substances that may otherwise be used in forests but are prohibited in areas designated for organic picking include chemical fertilizers, herbicides used in grass fields, elk-repelling fragrances and urea used as a fungal repellent. If a picker suspects that prohibited fertilizers or other such substances have been used in the organic picking area, the picking of berries should be discontinued. The buyer of berries should also be notified of the possible use of prohibited substances.

Organic berries may only be sold to buyers within the organic control system

The berries should be delivered to the buyer as they are and as soon as possible. **Organic forest berries are always sold to buyers belonging to the organic control system.** Selling directly to consumers is not allowed.

You may deliver berries that you have picked yourself or that have been collected by a minor under the age of 16 years old, if you have personally supervised the picking of the berries. The picker will specify the picking area of the berries in writing once the berries are delivered to the purchase point. If the picking area is not specified, the berries may not be regarded as organic.

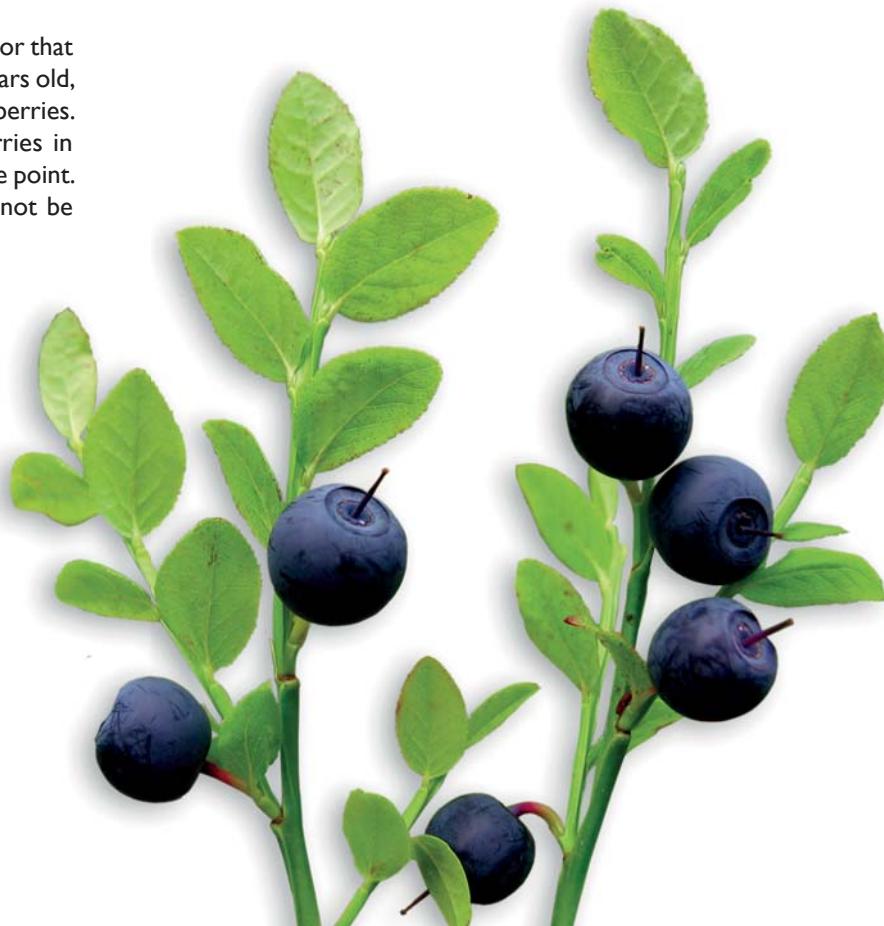
Pay attention to the quality of organic berries

When picking organic berries, normal instructions regarding hygiene, quality and Everyman's Rights also apply. Freshness and high quality are especially important when picking organic berries because the use of preservatives is very limited in the further processing of these berries.

Organic food production is overseen by the Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira

In Finland the authority responsible for supervising organic food production is the Food Safety Authority Evira (Elintarviketurvalisusvirasto). For further information, please see Evira's web page for details on wild plants: <http://www.evira.fi/portal/en/food/manufacture+and+sales/vegetables/wild+plants/> or organic production: <http://www.evira.fi/portal/en/about+evira/themes/organic+production/>

The official guidelines regarding organic wild natural products may be found in Finnish at <http://www.evira.fi/portal/fi/tietoa+evirasta/lomakkeet+ja+ohjeet/luomu/> (click on 5. Keruutuotanto).





Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*)



Cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*)



Lingonberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*)



Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum, E. hermaphroditum*)



Arctic Flavours Association

Kauppakatu 20, FI-89600 Suomussalmi

Tel. +358 (0)8 6155 5590

info@arctic-flavours.fi

www.arctic-flavours.fi

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