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Octofair has never been sweeter!



If it's spring, you can count on one thing, Bryan Roberts is making his famous jams. This former organic chemist has made an art out of creating some of the most mouth-watering flavors of homemade jam to ever grace the tables of lucky shoppers at the Octofair. For the last seven years Roberts has donated thousands of jars of homemade jam to the annual fall event, which is the largest fundraiser for the White Horse Village Residents Association.

Each year, Roberts lovingly dedicates May through October as his jam-making season, traveling to various orchards, stores, and markets to pick out the best fruit, whether fresh or frozen. In some cases, people donate the fruit, like his neighbor's daughter who brings him fresh figs from her tree. His finished product is always impressive and disappears quickly. In recent years he has enjoyed creating "boozie jams" such as bourbon-peach, kiwi-daiquiri, cranberry-port and strawberry-margarita. "The alcohol gets boiled off, but it has the flavors that come through nicely," said Roberts.

On a usual day, he begins cooking before his wife Lorma wakes, sterilizing the jars and making up to two batches, which nets him just over a dozen jars. By the time of the Octofair, Roberts has enough jam to donate more than 300 jars, consisting of up to 14 different flavors. But where does he put all the supplies and finished product? "I store them in closets, I store them under my bathroom sink, anywhere I can find space to put them," he explains. When asked if it drives Lorma crazy, she quickly interjects "yes!" "But she still puts up with me making the jam," teases Roberts. "She enjoys the cranberry conserve a lot."

The months of hard work are very fulfilling for Roberts on multiple levels. "People like it, I like it, and it helps raise money for a worthy cause. It also keeps me active. I'm 84 years old and I think it's important to be active."

If you are interested in getting your hands on a tasty jar, you will have to wait until the Octofair on October 8.

