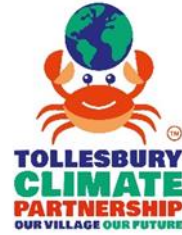


SLOE GIN



At this time of year there are hedgerows full of sloes, ready to be made into preserves. Sloes grow on the blackthorn tree, which has fearsome thorns, so care needs to be taken when harvesting them.

For each 1lb (450 grams) of sloes, use 1 pint of gin and mix in a large necked bottle or jar. The quality of the gin doesn't really matter, but obviously the better the gin the better the overall result. Most old recipes say you should prick all the sloes with a darning needle to release the juices, but if you freeze them for at least a few days first it will have the same effect for no effort on your part! Add 125 grams sugar per pint of gin to the mix. Store in a sealed demijohn or large necked bottle for at least three months, shaking it weekly. At the end of this time strain it through muslin into bottles (taste and add more sugar at this stage if you need to).

Variations:

- Use $\frac{1}{4}$ blackberries to $\frac{3}{4}$ sloes for a richer taste
- A few raspberries with the sloes give it a fresh taste
- Use your imagination – almost any red fruit can be mixed with the sloes and will give a different flavour and character to the result.
- A few drops of almond essence give depth of flavour
- Vodka or whisky can also be used with fruit in the same way – set your imagination free!!

