

# Bright Ranch Blackberry Pie

## “The Story”

The Bright Ranch is located on the south fork of Oak Creek above the historic Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery. On July 6, 2007 the fish hatchery was destroyed in the Inyo Complex Fire and anything that was left was wiped out in the devastating flood of July 12, 2008.



After those disastrous events, there was no evidence of the invasive and tenacious wild Himalayan Blackberry bushes that grew all over the property. Those blackberries were probably introduced as a cultivar in Inyo sometime after 1860 or so. They liked it in the riparian areas of Inyo County, and have spread far and wide.

Fast forward to 2016. They are back. Everywhere there is a bit of moisture on the ranch, along the creek, in the seeps and springs, you will find a mat of Himalayan Blackberry bushes. The only effect that the drought has on them is that the size of the berries becomes smaller.

Before the fire and the flood, every August was blackberry picking time. We went out with gloves and a bucket and wore boots (rattlesnakes liked to hide out in the cool shade of the vines). We literally fought for every bucket of blackberries. Gloves didn't always work against the sharp thorns, and other critters, like bees and wasps, liked the sweet juice of the berries. When we did come back after a successful blackberry picking foray, we would bake them in a pie and preserve the rest as jam.

When we were young, more than one of us used to use red blackberries as bait for the rainbow trout in our creek. Yes, we caught more than one fish that way! Now the south fork of Oak Creek is devoid of fish, but lined with blackberries.