

Tom and Margie
Chambers, The
Damson Collection



Cuisine *2011*
**artisan
awards**
with **CAFFE L'AFFARE**

THE DAMSON COLLECTION **DAMSON JAM**

The trio behind the Damson Collection, Margie and Tom Chambers, and Catherine Rusby, are champions of the damson.

Tart and acidic, this old-fashioned and now rarely seen plum needs to be cooked, packing a punchy plum flavour. Tom is from England where damsons are still popular and he put in an orchard in Hawke's Bay in the early 1990s. The Damson Collection – including the paste that was a winner last year – began in his home kitchen as treats for family and friends.

The recipe for the winning jam is his father's. There is no secret to it. "We cook in small batches with equal amounts of damsons and sugar," says

Margie, who left a corporate job to become chief cook.

Naturally high in pectin, the jam needs nothing else. Except a good dose of know-how. Margie doesn't use a thermometer – she knows exactly the proper jam simmer and lets it cook until it's "actually ready".

Her efforts are rewarded with customer comments like "that taste takes me down memory lane".

The judges noted a perfect balance between acidity and sugar, so rarely achieved in other jams.

Margie likes hers with bagels and cream cheese, and it's fantastic in baking, for example Louise cake.

thedamsoncollection.co.nz

