



The Full Sweetness of Summer Shines in Homemade Jams and Jellies

Preserving ripe, juicy berries, fresh peaches, apples, pears and other fruits as jams, jellies, preserves, conserves, marmalades, syrups, honeys or butters can add zest to meals, and provide a good way to use fruits not suitable for canning or freezing. To make a jellied fruit product, you need the proper proportions of four essential ingredients:

Fruit gives each product its characteristic color and flavor. Most recipes call for ripe, fresh fruit. But you may also be able to use canned, frozen or dried fruit. Use canned or frozen fruits preserved without sugar.

Pectin is the natural plant substance that causes fruit to gel. Pectin can be added to any fruit to ensure a good gel, and the color, flavor and yield of jam or jelly are much higher if you do so.

Acid is essential in jellied fruit products for both gel formation and flavor. The acid content varies among fruits, and is higher in under-ripe fruits. For best quality, add bottled lemon juice to fully ripened, low-acid fruits according to tested recipes.

Sugar is another essential ingredient in jellied fruit products. Added sugar preserves fruit, helps the gel form, and contributes to flavor. Use the amount of sugar a recipe calls for, or the product will not form a gel. To make a low-sugar or no-sugar product, choose a pectin or research-tested recipe designed for this. Sugar substitutes—also called artificial sweeteners—cannot replace sugar in regular recipes because the sugar is needed to form a gel.

There are a variety of options for storing jams and jellies. For a shelf stable product, fill hot product into hot, sterile canning jars and seal with pre-treated standard two-piece lids. Process in a boiling water canner for 5 minutes, or as directed by the recipe. As with other home-preserved products, always follow a research-tested recipe for homemade jellied fruit products. Do not invert jars or seal with paraffin. These methods do not ensure a good seal and can promote product spoilage. Or, if you have freezer space, consider storing jellied fruit products in appropriate containers in the freezer. For jellied fruit products at their best, make only the amount you can use within a year. Preserves stored for long periods of time lose their flavor and bright color, and may darken.

SIDE BAR:

What do you do when some jars of preserved fruit fail to set? You can choose to use the unset fruit as ice cream or pancake topping, or you can try to recook the product as follows: Measure the jam or jelly to be recooked. For each quart (4 cups) of jam or jelly measure:

1/4-cup sugar

1/4-cup water

4 teaspoons powdered pectin

Mix the pectin and water and bring to a boil, stirring constantly to prevent scorching. Add the soft jelly and sugar. Stir well. Bring to a full rolling boil over high heat, stirring constantly. Boil mixture hard for 30 seconds. Remove jam or jelly from heat, and skim off foam. Pour into hot sterilized half-pint jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Remove bubbles, wipe jar rims clean, and cap with new pre-treated lids. Process in a boiling water canner for 5 minutes.

A complete guide to Making Jams, Jellies and Fruit Preserves (B2909) is available from UW-Extension. The publication contains 60 recipes, as well as directions for making syrups, conserves and no-sugar products, and it is part of The Wisconsin Safe Food Preservation Series by Barbara Ingham. The series also includes: Canning Fruits Safely (B0430), Canning Meat, Wild Game, Poultry and Fish Safely (B3345), Canning Salsa Safely (B3570), Canning Vegetables Safely (B1159), Freezing Fruits and Vegetables (B3278), Homemade Pickles and Relishes (B2267) and Tomatoes Tart and Tasty (B2605). The publications are available from Outagamie County UW-Extension office or from Cooperative Extension Publications (877-947-7827) and online at <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu>. There is a fee for the publications; some are printable online free of charge.

Jam and Jelly Recipes

Strawberry Freezer Jam

(Try making this no-cook freezer jam on those summer days when it's too hot to be in the kitchen)

2 cups crushed strawberries (about 1 quart berries)
2 tablespoons lemon juice
4 cups sugar
1 pouch liquid pectin

Select and wash fully ripe berries. Remove stems, and crush. Carefully measure ingredients. Add sugar to fruit, mix well and let stand 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. In a small bowl, stir pectin into lemon juice. Add pectin mixture to prepared fruit, stirring completely until sugar is completely dissolved and no longer grainy, about 3 minutes. Pour into clean freezer container or canning jar, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Cover tightly, label and date. Let stand at room temperature 24 hours or until set. Refrigerate for up to 3 weeks, or freeze up to one year. Thaw in the refrigerator, then store refrigerated for up to one month. Yield 4 half-pints.

Golden Pepper Jelly

Food Safety Note: The addition of vinegar to the low acid sweet and hot peppers makes this recipe safe for boiling water canning. Do not reduce the amount of vinegar. The exact amounts of vinegar and sugar are also necessary to provide the conditions required to form a gel with the added pectin. Caution: Wear plastic gloves when handling hot peppers/hot pepper puree or wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching your face.

3 large fleshy yellow bell peppers
1 to 4 serrano chile peppers
1 cups white distilled 5% vinegar
7 cups sugar
1 pouch (3 oz.) liquid pectin
Yield: About 7 half-pints jars

Procedure:

1. Wash, rinse, and pre-sterilize 7 to 8 half-pint canning jars; keep hot until ready to use. Prepare lids according to manufacturer's directions.
2. Wash all peppers thoroughly; remove stems and seeds from the peppers. Do not remove the membrane from the hot peppers, since the remaining capsicum is located there.
3. Place sweet and hot peppers in a blender or food processor. Add enough vinegar to puree the peppers, then puree.
4. Combine the pepper-vinegar puree and remaining vinegar in a stainless steel or glass saucepan. Heat to a boil; then boil 20 minutes to extract flavors and color.
5. Remove from heat and strain through a jelly bag into a bowl. (The jelly bag is preferred; several layers of cheesecloth may also be used.)
6. Add the strained pepper-vinegar juice back to the saucepan. Stir in sugar until dissolved and return to a boil.
7. Add pectin and boil hard for 1 minute while constantly stirring.
8. Remove from heat and ladle into hot half-pint jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims with a dampened clean paper towel. Apply two-piece metal canning lids.
9. Process in a boiling water canner, 5 minutes. Let cool, undisturbed, for 12 to 24 hours and check for seals.
10. Sealed jars can be stored at room temperature in a cool, dark place. Once opened, the jelly must be kept refrigerated and will keep for up to several weeks.

Note: The use of yellow peppers gives this jelly a light golden color. Other color sweet peppers can substitute, but these will provide a different jelly color. Other hot peppers can substitute. Each hot pepper variety has a different heat index. It is best to start with a mild hot pepper flavor and increase it to personal tastes.

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Low-Sugar Peach Jam

(The natural sweetness of very ripe peaches will shine in this recipe)

4-1/2 cups chopped peaches (4 lbs. very ripe peaches)

2 tablespoons lemon juice

3 cups sugar

1 package low-sugar pectin

Wash, peel, pit and finely chop ripe fruit.

Measure exact amount of chopped peaches into a large saucepan. Add lemon juice. Measure sugar into a separate bowl.

Mix pectin with 1/4 cup sugar from the measured amount in another small bowl.

Stir pectin-sugar mixture into fruit, avoiding lumps. Add 1/4 teaspoon butter or margarine to prevent foaming, if desired. Bring mixture to a full rolling boil on high heat, stirring constantly.

Quickly stir in remaining sugar. Return to a full boil and boil exactly 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.

Ladle at once into hot, sterilized half-pint jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace.

Wipe jar rims and threads clean. Cover at once with hot lids, and screw bands on firmly.

Process in a boiling water canner for 5 minutes. Yield 5 half-pints.

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