

Preserving the Harvest

Making Jams and Jellies with Reduced or No Sugar

When making traditional jams and jellies, sugar is an important ingredient. It serves as the preservative, helps the pectin produce a good gel, and adds flavor. However, there is a growing interest and desire for jams and jellies made with either sugar substitutes or less sugar. Is this possible? The answer is yes, but it *requires the use of special recipes*. It is important to use current, research-based recipes available from the National Center for Home Food Preservation (<http://nchfp.uga.edu/>) or those developed by the manufacturers of home food preservation supplies. Do not reduce the amount of sugar or use sugar substitutes in traditional recipes as this could result in spoilage and/or a poor quality product.

Methods for making jams and jellies with reduced or no added sugar

1. *Special modified pectins*. These pectins are specifically designed for use with reduced or no added sugar recipes. Look for packages that have “light,” “less sugar,” or “no sugar needed” on the label. These pectins have specific recipes and instructions that must be followed. Process or store in the refrigerator as directed.
2. *Regular pectin with special recipes*. These special recipes often include artificial sweeteners. Jams and jellies made with this method must be stored in the refrigerator or freezer. This is because sugar, which acts as a preservative, is not used. Keep in mind that a package of regular pectin does contain some added sugar.
3. *Recipes using gelatin*. These recipes use gelatin to thicken the jelly and jam. Artificial sweeteners are also used. These jams and jellies must be stored in the refrigerator.
4. *Long-boil method*. Boiling fruit for long periods of time can make a product thicken like a jam or fruit butter. Artificial sweetener can be added. These products must be stored in the refrigerator.

No-sugar added recipes using regular pectin

Peach Jam with Pectin

(makes about 3 half-pint jars)

| | |
|--|---|
| 4 cups peeled peaches | ½ teaspoon ascorbic acid |
| 3 to 4 teaspoons liquid artificial sweetener | 1 ¾ ounce package powdered fruit pectin |
| 1 tablespoon lemon juice | |

Crush peaches in saucepan. Stir in sweetener, fruit pectin, lemon juice, and ascorbic acid. Bring to a boil and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and continue to stir for 2 minutes. Pour into freezer containers, cover and freeze. Thaw for use. Once thawed, refrigerate and use within one month.

Strawberry Jam with Pectin

(makes 2 or 3 half-pint jars)

1 quart cleaned strawberries 1 package powdered fruit pectin
3 to 4 teaspoons liquid artificial sweetener 1 tablespoon lemon juice Red food coloring (as desired)

Crush strawberries in a 1 ½ quart saucepan. Stir in artificial sweetener, food coloring, powdered fruit pectin, and lemon juice. Bring to a boil and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and continue to stir for 2 more minutes. Pour into freezer containers, cover and freeze. Thaw for use. Once thawed, refrigerate and use within one month.

Jelly recipes using gelatin

Apple Jelly from Bottled Juice

(makes about 4 half-pint jars)

2 tablespoons unflavored gelatin 2 tablespoons lemon juice Food coloring, if desired
1 quart unsweetened apple juice 2 tablespoons liquid sweetener

Wash and sterilize jars. After the jars have been sterilized, keep them hot. In a saucepan, soften gelatin in apple juice and lemon juice. Bring to a rolling boil, dissolving gelatin. Boil 1 minute then remove from heat. Stir in liquid sweetener and food coloring. Pour into hot sterilized jars. Add lids and bands and let the jars cool. Once the jars are cooled, store them in the refrigerator and use within one month.

Apple Jelly

(makes about 2 half-pint jars)

4 teaspoons unflavored gelatin 1 ½ tablespoons lemon juice Food coloring, if desired
2 cups unsweetened apple juice 2 tablespoons liquid sweetener

Wash and sterilize jars. After the jars have been sterilized, keep them hot. Soften gelatin in ½ cup of apple juice. Bring remaining 1 ½ cups of juice to a boil then remove from heat. Add the softened gelatin, stirring to dissolve. Add liquid sweetener, lemon juice and coloring. Bring to a full, rolling boil then pour into sterilized jars. Add lids and bands and let the jars cool. Once the jars are cooled, store them in the refrigerator and use within one month.

Grape Jelly

(makes 3 half-pint jars)

2 tablespoons unflavored gelatin 1 bottle (24 ounces) unsweetened grape juice
2 tablespoons lemon juice 2 tablespoons liquid sweetener

Wash and sterilize jars. After the jars have been sterilized, keep them hot. In a saucepan, soften the gelatin in the lemon and grape juices. Bring to a rolling boil, dissolving the gelatin. Boil for 1 minute and then remove from heat. Stir in the liquid sweetener. Pour jelly into hot sterilized jars. Seal the jars, cool and then store in the refrigerator. Use within one month.

Refrigerator Jelly made with Splenda®

(makes about 4 half-pint jars)

2 packages or 2 tablespoons unflavored gelatin
4¼ cups bottled unsweetened fruit juice (1 quart plus ¼ cup)*
½ cup Splenda® Granular

Wash and sterilize jars. After the jars have been sterilized, keep them hot. In a saucepan soften gelatin in juice. Bring to a rolling boil, dissolving gelatin; boil 1 minute. Remove from heat. Stir in Splenda® granular. Skim foam if needed. Pour into hot sterilized jars, leaving at least ¼-inch headspace. Apply lids, cool and store in refrigerator. **(Do not process in a canner or freeze.)** Use within one month.

Reduced-sugar fruit spread

Peach-Pineapple Spread

(makes 5 to 6 half-pints)

4 cups drained peach pulp (procedure as below**) 2 cups drained unsweetened crushed pineapple
1/4 cup bottled lemon juice 2 cups sugar (optional)

Note: This recipe may be made with any combination of peaches, nectarines, apricots, and plums.

This recipe may be made without sugar or with up to 2 cups of sugar, according to taste or preference. Non-nutritive sweeteners may be added. If aspartame (a low-calorie nutritive sweetener) is used, the sweetening power of aspartame may be lost within 3 to 4 weeks.

**Thoroughly wash 4 to 6 pounds of firm, ripe peaches. Drain well. Peel and remove pits. Grind fruit with a medium or coarse blade, or crush with a fork (do not use a blender). Place ground or crushed fruit in a 2-quart saucepan. Heat slowly to release juice, stirring constantly, until fruit is tender. Place cooked fruit in a jelly bag or strainer lined with four layers of cheesecloth. Allow juice to drip about 15 minutes. Save the juice for jelly or other uses. Measure 4 cups of drained fruit pulp for making spread. Combine the 4 cups of pulp, pineapple, and lemon juice in a 4-quart saucepan. Add up to 2 cups of sugar, if desired, and mix well. Heat and boil gently for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring enough to prevent sticking. Fill jars quickly, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Process in a boiling water canner for the time listed below (based on jar size and altitude).

| | Processing Times (in minutes) at Altitudes | | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| | 0-1,000 feet | 1001-3000 feet | 3001-6000 feet | Above 6,000 feet |
| Half-pints | 15 | 20 | 20 | 25 |
| Pints | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 |

References:

Andress, Elizabeth and Harrison, Judy. *So Easy to Preserve*, 5th edition. Cooperative Extension, University of Georgia. 2006
National Center for Home Food Preservation. <http://nchfp.uga.edu/>.

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