

# Some simple alternatives to making freezer jam

Making jams and jellies isn't the only way to save your surplus produce. You can simply freeze it without a lot of prep work.

For help on the best way to freeze foods, pick up the 32nd edition of the Ball "Blue Book."

According to the authors, freezing is a good way to preserve foods because freezing retains the flavor, natural color and nutritive qualities of most foods better than other methods. Most vegetables should be

blanched and then frozen. Some fruits can be frozen whole without sugar, while others should be stored either in a sugar pack or syrup pack — a mixture of water or juice, sugar, ascorbic and citric acid to prevent discoloration.

Nothing could be easier than freezing berries. Use this method for blueberries, cranberries, strawberries and raspberries. Wash thoroughly, drain, pat dry, and put on cookie sheet in the freezer.

When berries are frozen, dump them into a resealable plastic freezer bag. While you're doing this, imagine how delicious fresh blueberry muffins will taste on a cold Sunday morning in February.

Plums can also be frozen whole without sugar. Wash, halve and pit plums. Pack the washed and drained plums in a plastic freezer bag, attempting to fill all space, seal and freeze.

For the best-tasting frozen vegetables, process on the day they're picked or bought. Vegetables to be stored or frozen for more than four weeks, except green onions, hot peppers and herbs, should be scalded. This cleanses the vegetables of dirt and organisms, brightens the color, helps retain vitamins and reduces the action of enzymes that would destroy the fresh flavor after about four weeks. Scalding also shrinks vegetables, making packing easier.

Before scalding, wash, drain, sort and trim vegetables as you would if you were cooking them fresh.

Use 1 gallon of water per pound of vegetables. Put vegetables into a blancher (wire basket, coarse mesh bag or perforated metal container) and lower it into vigorously boiling water.

Begin counting the time as soon as the vegetable is placed in the boiling water. Keep the heat on high and stir water, or keep

container covered during blanching.

Cool the vegetables by immersing in ice water when scalding is complete. Pouring hot vegetables into a cool colander that's placed in ice water helps the vegetables cool quickly. Package, label and place in freezer.

Consult the Ball "Blue Book" or a basic cookbook, such as a Betty Crocker book, for vegetable blanching times and more information on freezing fruits.

# Freezing preserves summer's freshness for wintry days

See related story on Taste front. For best flavor, use freezer jams and jellies in freezer for up to one year. Store in refrigerator 3 weeks. Thaw in refrigerator.

## EASY HOMEMADE STRAWBERRY JAM

1 box Sure-Jell Light Fruit Pectin  
3/4 cups sugar, divided  
4 cups crushed strawberries (buy 2 quarts fully ripe strawberries)

Mix fruit pectin and 1/4 cup sugar in small bowl. Add pectin mixture to fruit, stirring vigorously. Let stand 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stir remaining sugar gradually into fruit mixture until sugar is completely dissolved and no longer

grainy, about 3 minutes. (A few sugar crystals may remain.) Pour into clean plastic containers; cover. Let stand at room temperature 24 hours. Jam is now ready to use. Store in refrigerator or freeze extra containers. Thaw in refrigerator. Makes about 6 (1 cup) containers.

## HERB JELLY

3/4 cups boiling water  
3/4 cup minced fresh basil or 1/4 cup dried basil leaves  
1/4 cup minced fresh parsley  
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel  
2 to 3 drops green food coloring (optional)  
6 cups sugar  
3/4 cup water  
1 box Sure-Jell fruit pectin

Mix water, basil, parsley and lemon peel in large bowl; cover. Let stand 15 minutes. Place 3 layers damp cheesecloth or jelly bag in another bowl. Pour herb infusion into cheesecloth. Tie cheesecloth closed; hang and let drip. When dripping has almost ceased, press gently. Measure 3 cups into large bowl. Add food coloring. Stir sugar thoroughly into herb infusion. Let stand 10 minutes; stir occasionally.

Stir water and fruit pectin in saucepan. Bring to a boil on high heat, stirring constantly. Continue boiling and stirring 1 minute.

Stir pectin mixture into herb infusion mixture. Stir constantly until sugar is completely dissolved and no longer grainy, about 3 minutes. (A few sugar crystals may remain.) Pour into clean plastic containers; cover. Let stand at room temperature 24 hours. Jam is now ready to use. Store in refrigerator or

freeze extra containers. Thaw in refrigerator. Makes about 7 (1 cup) containers.

## SALSA JAM

1 box Sure-Jell Light Fruit Pectin  
1 1/2 cups sugar, divided  
2 cups finely chopped tomatoes (buy 8 fully ripe plum tomatoes)  
1 cup tomato sauce  
1/4 cup finely chopped onions (buy 2 medium onions)  
4 cup minced cilantro  
1/4 cup finely chopped pickled jalapeno peppers  
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel  
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice  
1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Mix fruit pectin and 1/4 cup of the sugar in small bowl. Mix tomatoes, tomato sauce, onions, cilantro,

peppers, lime juice and hot pepper sauce thoroughly in large bowl.

Add pectin mixture gradually to vegetable mixture, stirring vigorously. Let stand 10 minutes; stir occasionally.

Stir remaining sugar into vegetable mixture. Stir constantly until sugar is completely dissolved and no longer grainy, about 3 minutes. (A few sugar crystals may remain.) Pour into clean plastic containers; cover. Let stand at room temperature 24 hours. Jam is now ready to use. Store in refrigerator or freeze extra containers. Thaw in refrigerator. Makes 4 (1 cup) containers.

## RASPBERRY PEACH JAM

2 cups crushed raspberries (buy about 1 1/2 pints fully ripe red raspberries)  
1 1/2 cups finely chopped, peeled peaches (buy 1 1/4

pounds fully ripe peaches)  
7 cups sugar  
1 box Sure-Jell Fruit Pectin  
3/4 cup water

Mix raspberries, peaches and sugar thoroughly in large bowl. Let stand 10 minutes; stir occasionally. Stir fruit pectin and water in saucepan. Bring to a boil on high heat, stirring constantly. Continue boiling and stirring 1 minute. Stir pectin mixture into fruit mixture. Stir constantly until sugar is completely dissolved and no longer grainy. About 3 minutes. (A few sugar crystals may remain.) Pour into clean plastic containers; cover. Let stand at room temperature 24 hours. Jam is now ready to use. Store in refrigerator or freeze extra containers. Thaw in refrigerator. Makes about 7 (1 cup) containers.

Recipes from Kraft General Foods, Inc.

## COOKING CALENDAR

To get your classes or events listed in this column, send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Taste Editor, the Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150. Or fax to 591-7279.

**LES SAISONS**  
Les Saisons — Expressions in Cooking will feature Coastal Italian, Classical Seafood Dishes with Chef de Cuisine Michael Berrod of Les Auteurs, 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, July 28 at Les Saisons, 304 W. Fourth Street Royal Oak, 845-3400. Cost \$30 per class for three for \$75. Classes meet Wednesday evenings through August. The August 11 cooking class will feature a summer dinner menu and wine tasting with Chef Paul Gross of The Whitney.

**LENORE'S NATURAL CUISINE**  
A cool and frozen desserts cooking class will be offered 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 7. The cost is \$25. A beginning cooking series of four classes will be offered 6-9 p.m. beginning Monday, Aug. 9. The cost is \$110 for four classes. For information on these and other classes at Lenore's Natural Cuisine in Farmington Hills, call 478-4455.

**SCHOOLCRAFT**  
Schoolcraft College in Livonia is offering an advanced certificate in Culinary Management through its culinary arts department this fall. To register, or for more information, call 462-4423.

# Before returning to canning, update skills

If you haven't done any home canning for a few years it might be wise to consult the Food and Nutrition Hot line for the latest USDA recommendations.

That's the word from Sylvia Treitman, home economist for the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service. "Canning must be done properly to ensure a safe product," she said. Improperly canned foods can be very dangerous, even deadly.

There have been some canning changes in the past few years. All tomato products need acidification to ensure a safe product and all home-canned products need to be properly processed. Canning times also have changed in the past few years. All low-acid foods need to be processed in a pressure canner.

Here are a few important canning tips:

- Use an up-to-date canning recipe that is USDA recommended such as the 32nd edition of the Ball "Blue Book."
- Never use hand-me-down canning recipes or processing times.
- Process all home-canned foods, including jams, jellies and pickles.
- If you don't know if a home-canned product has been properly processed — don't even taste

it. Dispose of it. The Food and Nutrition Hot line is a public service which provides the latest safe food preservation guidelines for anyone living in Oakland County. The Food and Nutrition Hot line takes calls from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at 858-0904. Experts answer all your food preservation questions as well as other food and nutrition-related inquiries.

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