

Strawberry Basics

SELECTING AND STORING STRAWBERRIES

- Choose bright red, fresh and clean strawberries with a sweet scent. Choose berries with green caps still attached.
- Avoid, shriveled, soft or bruised strawberries or those with dry, browning caps.
- Avoid large, sticky or stained containers.
- Strawberries do not continue to ripen and should be stored unwashed in the refrigerator, covered with plastic wrap. Rinse gently just before using.
- Strawberries will keep 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator. Note: Irradiated strawberries will keep up to three weeks in the refrigerator. See HGIC 3866, *Food Irradiation*.

FREEZING STRAWBERRIES

Select fully ripe, firm berries with a deep red color. Discard immature and defective fruit. Wash gently and remove caps.

Syrup Pack: Put whole berries in containers and cover with cold, heavy, syrup. To prepare syrup dissolve 4 cups sugar in 4 cups water, pack into freezer containers, leaving ½-inch headspace for pint containers and 1-inch headspace for quarts.

Sugar Pack: Add ¾ cup sugar to 1 quart (1½ pounds) whole, sliced or crushed strawberries and mix thoroughly. Stir until most of the sugar is dissolved or let stand for 15 minutes. Place in containers, leaving ½-inch headspace for pints and 1-inch headspace for quarts.

Dry Pack: Pack strawberries in freezer containers, seal and freeze. Or, place a layer of strawberries on a shallow tray and freeze. When frozen, promptly package in freezer containers and return to freezer.

STRAWBERRY JAM

2 quarts crushed strawberries
6 cups sugar

Combine berries and sugar; bring slowly to boiling, stirring occasionally until sugar dissolves. Cook rapidly until thick, about 40 minutes. As mixture thickens, stir frequently to prevent sticking. Pour hot jam immediately into hot, sterile canning jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process for 5 minutes in a boiling water bath canner at altitudes up to 1,000 feet. (Add 1 minute to the processing time for each 1,000 feet of additional altitude.) Yield: 8 half-pint jars

UNCOOKED STRAWBERRY FREEZER JAM

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

Place strawberries in an extra large bowl. Add sugar, mix well and let stand for 10 minutes. Measure lemon juice into a small bowl, add liquid pectin and mix well. Stir into fruit and continue stirring for 3 minutes. Pour jam into freezer containers or canning jars, leaving ½-inch headspace. Cover container. Let stand at room temperature until set (up to 24 hours). Freeze or refrigerate.

JAMS WITH ARTIFICIAL SWEETNERS

Jellied products without sugar or with reduced sugar cannot be made by leaving the sugar out of regular jelly recipes. Note that jams and jellies made with Splenda® granular must use a low-methoxyl pectin with calcium added (such as Mrs. Wages Lite Home Jell® or Pomona's Universal Pectin). Regular pectin and even some no-sugar needed pectin will not gel with Splenda® granular. Read pectin manufacturer's instructions before making jam.

Refrigerator Strawberry Jam with Splenda®

Makes 3 half-pint jars.

4 cups rinsed and hulled chopped fresh strawberries
1½ cups Splenda® Granular
¼ cup lemon juice
2 teaspoons to 1 box Low-Methoxyl Pectin with calcium (The amount needed varies by brand.)
4 to 6 drops red food coloring (optional)

Place strawberries in a medium saucepan. Crush with a potato masher. Add lemon juice. Cook over medium heat approximately 5 minutes, or until mixture comes to a full boil, stirring constantly.

Blend Splenda® Granular with powdered pectin in a small bowl. Incorporate pectin and Splenda® Granular into mashed strawberries using a wire whisk. Gently stir mixture and bring to a boil. Boil for 1 minute or until pectin and Splenda® Granular have dissolved. Add optional coloring. Mix well and simmer one more minute.

Fill clean hot jars with jelly (leaving ¼ inch of headspace) and seal with two-part lids. Store jam in refrigerator. After opening, jam can be stored, refrigerated, for two weeks.

Nutrition Information per 1 Tbsp. Serving: Calories 10, Carbohydrates 2g, Protein 0g, Sugars 1g, Dietary Fiber 0g, Total Fat 0g, Saturated Fat 0g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 0mg. This recipe when compared to a full sugar version, represents a 50% reduction in calories, a 60% reduction in carbohydrates and a 100% reduction in sugar.

Strawberry Freezer Jam with Liquid Saccharin

This jam uses regular pectin (which contains some sugar), but the recipe is modified to use without added sugar. Makes 2 or 3 half-pint jars

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

Crush strawberries in 1½-quart saucepan. Stir in artificial sweetener, food coloring, powdered fruit pectin and lemon juice. Bring to a boil, and boil 1 minute. Remove from heat. Continue to stir 2 minutes. Pour into freezer containers, leaving ½-inch headspace; cover and freeze. Thaw for use, then keep refrigerated.

For more information on making jams and jellies with artificial sweeteners and other food preservation information, contact your local Extension office or the Home and Garden Information Center at 1-888-656-9988 or on the web at <http://hgic.clemson.edu>.

SOURCE: Reynolds, Susan. *So Easy to Preserve*, Bulletin 989. Cooperative Extension Service, the University of Georgia. Fourth Edition revised by Elizabeth Andress and Judy Harrison, 1999.

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