

LET'S PRESERVE

Strawberries

Recommended Varieties

Northeast, Earliglow, Guardian, Redchief, Jewel, and Sparkle are usually excellent-quality berries for freezing. Most other varieties are suitable, especially for making jams and eating fresh. Strawberries imported from California or Florida are best for eating fresh. Homegrown varieties are best for making jams and freezing.

Quantity

A 24-quart crate weighs 36 pounds and yields 18 to 24 quarts. An average of 1 pound makes 1 pint of frozen berries. One pound of fresh berries is approximately 1 quart of fresh berries.

Quality

Freeze strawberries or preserve them on the day they are harvested for best quality. They should be picked when they reach an ideal maturity for eating fresh. Select berries with fresh, sweet flavor; deep, uniform color; and firm texture. Smaller, misshapen, and seedy berries make good-quality jams.

Berry Preparation

Remove caps. Wash 1 to 2 quarts at a time and drain. Do not soak berries.

Freezing Procedure

Don't freeze more than 2 pounds of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. Whole berries may be packed in syrup or dry sugar or frozen without sugar. Sliced or crushed berries should be made with a dry sugar pack.

- To make a syrup pack: Dissolve 3 cups of sugar in 4 cups of water. Add 1 cup of this syrup per quart of prepared fruit.
- To make a dry sugar pack: Mix $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of dry sugar per quart of prepared fruit. Stir until most of the sugar is dissolved or let stand for 15 minutes.
- To make a dry pack: Omit sugar.



- To package: Fill plastic freezer containers, freezer jars, or zip-type freezer bags; remove air; seal; and label. Sealed bags may be frozen flat on a tray and stacked when completely frozen. If using rigid containers, allow $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of headspace for dry pack and 1 inch of headspace for syrup pack berries in quarts.
- Prepared berries can also be individually quick frozen (IQF) first on a tray and then packed into containers as soon as they are frozen. IQF berries may be used partially thawed as a snack.

Strawberry Jam

Strawberry jam can be made from several commercial pectin products. To make jam with added pectin, follow the instructions of the pectin manufacturer to ensure obtaining a desirable mixture.

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Uncooked Strawberry Jam from Fresh Fruit*

- 1 ¾ cups crushed strawberries (about 1 quart)
- 4 cups sugar
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 pouch liquid pectin (3 oz)

Yields approx. 4 half-pint jars

PROCEDURE. Measure 1 ¾ cups of crushed strawberries. Place 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 stir well. Stir into fruit and continue stirring for 3 minutes. Pour jam into freezer containers or canning jars, leaving ½ inch of headspace. Cover container. Let stand at room temperature until set (up to 24 hours). Freeze or refrigerate.

*Source: Address, Elizabeth L., and Judy A. Harrison, *So Easy to Preserve*, 5th ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, 2006).



Strawberry-Rhubarb Jelly

- 1 ½ lb rhubarb
- 1 ½ quarts strawberries
- jelly bag or cheesecloth
- ½ teaspoon butter
- 6 cups sugar
- 6 oz (2 pouches) liquid pectin

Yields 7 half-pints

PROCEDURE. Wash and cut rhubarb into 1-inch pieces and blend or grind. Wash, stem, and crush strawberries, one layer at a time, in a saucepan. Place both fruits in a jelly bag or double layer of cheesecloth and gently squeeze out juice. Put 3 ½ cups of juice into a large saucepan. Add butter and sugar, thoroughly mixing into juice. Bring to a boil over high heat, stirring constantly. Immediately stir in liquid pectin. Bring to a full, rolling boil and boil hard for 1 minute.

Quickly skim off any foam and immediately place in sterile jars, leaving ¼ inch of headspace. Wipe sealing edge of jars with a clean, damp paper towel. Add lids, tighten screw bands, and process jars in boiling water according to Table 1.

After processing is complete, turn off heat and remove canner lid. Wait 5 minutes. Remove jars from canner with a jar lifter and place on a towel or rack. Do not retighten screw bands. Air-cool jars for 12 to 24 hours. Remove screw bands and check lid seals. If the center of the lid is indented, wash, dry, label, and store jar in a clean, cool, dark place. If the lid is unsealed, examine and replace jar if defective, use new lids, and reprocess as before. Wash screw bands and store separately. Fruits are best if consumed within a year and are safe as long as the lids remain vacuum sealed.

Table 1. Recommended process times for hot pack in a boiling water canner.

Jar size	Process times (in minutes) at altitudes of		
	0–1,000 ft	1,001–2,000 ft	Above 2,000 ft
Half-pints or pints	5	10	15

For additional information about food preservation, visit the Penn State Extension Home Food Preservation website at extension.psu.edu/food/preservation, or contact Penn State Extension in your county.

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