

Stovetop Jam

Makes 4 cups/1 liter; 4 half-pint/250ml jars

While jam often feels like sugar thickened with fruit, this here is a celebration of the fruit itself, cooked just long enough to get rid of excess moisture with just enough sugar to highlight its texture and flavor. While I do enjoy a low-sugar jam, it's not quite as good a candidate for canning. (The sugar in jam acts as a preservative.) That said, "not canning" has never once stopped me from making jam; I just got into the habit of keeping it in the fridge instead of the pantry.

Ingredients

4 pounds/1.8kg blueberries, raspberries, or blackberries; or 4½ pounds/2kg strawberries (hulled and quartered), peaches, nectarines, plums, or apricots (pitted and chopped)

3 cups/660g sugar

¼ cup/60g fresh lemon or lime juice (about 2 lemons or limes)

Instructions

1. In a large heavy-bottomed pot, toss the fruit and sugar together. Let sit at least 15 minutes, up to overnight, tossing periodically to dissolve the sugar (this will help coax the juices out of the fruit to give the jam a head start).
2. Bring the fruit to a strong simmer over medium-high heat, until the juices start to boil, 3–4 minutes.
3. Reduce the heat to medium and continue cooking. Using a wooden spoon or spatula, stir the jam occasionally at first, then more frequently as the jam cooks and juices thicken (see Note). Cook until most of the liquid has evaporated and the fruit has started to break down to the point you'd start to call it "jammy," 40–50 minutes. How much it breaks down will depend on the fruit (e.g., strawberries and peaches are likely to remain chunkier while raspberries and apricots will break down almost entirely).
4. Add the lemon juice and continue to cook, stirring constantly, until the jam has returned to its previously thickened state, another 8–10 minutes. Test the jam by spooning a bit of jam onto a plate and pop it into the fridge for a few minutes, then drag your finger through it—it should hold its shape without appearing watery or runny. If it's not there yet, cook a few minutes more. (Some fruit, like strawberries, contain more water and less natural pectin than, say, a raspberry. So the jam may never be quite as thick or gelled, but will nevertheless be delicious.)
5. Remove from the heat. Using a ladle (carefully! The jam is very hot!), divide jam among 4 half-pint/250ml jars and seal immediately. Let come to room temperature on your counter before refrigerating (or canning).

DO AHEAD: The jam can be made 2–3 months ahead and stored in the refrigerator.

ALISON ROMAN