



## Strawberry Jam

**Strawberries are a star attraction in this jam -- as well as at pick-your-own operations, farmers' markets and maybe even your own backyard.**

### Strawberry Lore

Native Americans made a tea from dried strawberry leaves, said to soothe the stomach and relieve diarrhea. In Medieval times, the strawberry was thought to symbolize perfection and righteousness. They were often served at important feasts and festivals to help ensure peace and prosperity.

Their versatility makes them a favorite fruit of the season. From chocolate-covered berries to shortcake, pie and strawberry jam, there are sundry ways to spotlight strawberries in your summertime menus.

If you're fortunate enough to have a berry patch in your yard, you can be selective about the ones you pick—large, firm, red berries when you want to serve them covered in chocolate; riper, softer ones when you're in the mood to make shortcake and jams.

Firm or soft, all are wonderful in pies—strawberry pie, strawberry-rhubarb pie or strawberry chiffon pie.

This recipe calls for no pectin; it relies on the natural pectin in the fruit to help with jelling.

### Ingredients

2 pounds fresh strawberries, hulled 4 cups sugar 1/4 cup lemon juice

### Special tools

### Tips

#### Frozen Strawberries

If jam really isn't your thing, freezing strawberries is very easy. The simplest way is to choose firm, slightly underripe berries, hull them, wash and dry them well, and freeze in a single layer on a cookie sheet. When frozen, store them in a labeled freezer bag or other freezer-proof container.

Some people prefer frozen strawberries in a juice. To do this, pack them with sugar as follows:

Hull, wash and dry berries well. Prick whole berries with a fork or crush berries if preferred. Place in a large bowl and sprinkle with sugar, making sure all berries are coated. Use 1 pound of sugar for every 4 pounds of berries. Let stand 10 to 20 minutes to draw out juice. Pack gently into appropriate freezer-proof containers, then label, seal and freeze.

#### Strawberry Helper

If you're a big fan of cooking with fresh strawberries, a strawberry huller is an indispensable tool. The tweezer-like gadget, about 2 to 3 inches long, removes the stem and white core, but doesn't remove the strawberry flesh. You can find them in any kitchen store, ranging in price from \$1.25 to \$3. Strawberry huller or sharp knife Potato masher Candy thermometer Hot, sterilized canning jars (pints or half pints) Hot, sterilized lids and screw tops Tongs or jar lifters

#### Preparation

To sterilize jars and lids, place them in a large pot, cover with hot water and bring to a boil. Boil for 10 minutes, then turn off heat and leave jars and lids in water until ready for use. Place small plate in the freezer to use in testing the berry mixture for jelling. Wash and hull berries. In a large bowl, crush berries in batches with a potato masher until you have four cups of mashed berries. In a heavy saucepan, combine berries, sugar and lemon juice. Stir over low heat until sugar is dissolved; then increase heat and bring mixture to a rolling boil. Hook candy thermometer to side of pan so that tip sits well into mixture. Continue boiling the mixture, stirring often, until temperature on thermometer reads 220 degrees F. To test for jelling, remove plate from freezer and place a teaspoon of the berry mixture onto the plate. Return plate to the freezer for one minute. Remove and run finger through the jam on the plate. If it doesn't try to run back together, it's ready to be canned. Fill hot, sterilized jars with berry mixture to within 1/4- to 1/2-inch of top. Add lids and screw tops, and seal tightly. Tip jars upside down so that hot berry mixture coats inside of lid to seal.

A word to the wise: If this is your first foray into jam making, don't be tempted to double the recipe to use up an



abundance of berries. If it doesn't come out quite right, you'll have a lot of disappointing jam to use up. One of the biggest problems with this kind of jam is undercooking, resulting in jam that's too runny.