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Where you can find a pick-your-own farm near you!

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How to Make Homemade Fig-Strawberry Jam



Making and canning your own jam is also quite easy. Here's how to do it, in 10 easy steps and completely illustrated. The fig and strawberry combination is a perfect match: the sweetness of figs coupled with the tartness and aromatic flavor of strawberries is ideal, allowing you to use much less sugar or even go sugarless! This recipe is all-natural, using fresh or frozen strawberries and figs. Every other fig-strawberry recipe I've seen calls for strawberry Jell-o instead of real strawberries! Gross!

I've got some other pages for specific types of jam, too: See [this page for Fig Jam](#), [this page for Blueberry Jam](#) directions and this page for [how to make apricot, peach, plum or nectarine jam](#).

For more information about figs and strawberries, see [Fig Picking Tips](#), [Strawberry Picking Tips](#) and [Miscellaneous strawberry facts](#). Also, see this page for [directions about how to can figs](#) and [this page for strawberry and other berry jams!](#)

For easy [applesauce](#) or [apple butter](#) directions, click on these links.

Ingredients and Equipment

- **Fruit** - preferably fresh figs and strawberries, but frozen (without added sugar or syrup works, too)
- **Pectin** (it's a natural product, made from apples and available at grocery stores (season - spring through late summer) and in Wal-mart, grocery stores, etc. It usually goes for about \$2.00 to \$2.50 per box. [See here for more information about how to choose the type of pectin to use.](#)
- **Sugar** - About 2 and 1/4 cups of dry, granulated (table) sugar. You can omit the sugar and just add 1 cup of juice (white grape or peach work best), or even just use 1 cup of Splenda.
- **Jar grabber** (to pick up the hot jars)- WalMart carries it *sometimes* - or order it here. It's a tremendously useful to put cars in the canner and take the hot jars out (without scalding yourself!). The kit sold below has everything you need, and at a pretty good price:
- **Jar funnel** (\$2 at WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores) or order it as part of the kit with the jar grabber.
- **At least 1 large pot**; I prefer 16 to 20 quart Teflon lined pots for easy cleanup.
- **Large spoons and ladles**
- **1 Canner** (a huge pot to sterilize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at WalMart (seasonal item). Note: [we sell canners and supplies here, too - at excellent prices](#) - and it helps support this web site!
- **Ball jars** (Publix, WalMart carry them - about \$7 per dozen 8 ounce jars including the lids and rings)
- **Lids** - thin, flat, round metal lids with a gum binder that seals them against the top of the jar. They may only be used once.
- **Rings** - metal bands that secure the lids to the jars. They may be reused many times.

Optional stuff:

- **Lid lifter** (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sterilize them. (\$2 at WalMart or it comes in the kit at left)



Jam-making Directions

Step 1 - Pick the figs and berries! (or buy them already picked)

It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality ones!

At right is a picture I took of Brown Turkey figs - they are plentiful in late August throughout the South. Other types of figs are fine, too. Strawberries are usually in season in May or June in most areas, so you may want to pick and freeze your strawberries (without sugar) and make this jam when the figs come in season. [See this page on freezing strawberries.](#)



I prefer to grow my own; which is really easy, especially for figs, strawberries can more challenging - but growing anything does take some space and time.

That's why we have pick-your-own farms!



As mentioned above; you may use frozen berries (those without syrup or added sugar); which is especially useful if you want to make some jam in December to give away at Christmas!

Above and at left are strawberries that I picked at a pick-your-own farm. If you want to pick your own, here is a list and links to the [pick your own farms](#).

How much fruit?

Jam can ONLY be made in rather small batches - about 6 cups of prepared fruit at a time - like the directions on the pectin say, DO NOT increase the recipes or the jam won't "set" (jell, thicken). (WHY? Alton Brown on the Food Channel says pectin can overcook easily and lose its thickening properties. It is easier and faster to get an even heat distribution in smaller batches. . It takes about 4 cups of raw, unprepared berries and 4 cups of figs per batch.

Step 2 - Wash the jars and lids



Now's a good time to get the jars ready, so you won't be rushed later. The dishwasher is fine for the jars, the water bath processing will sterilize them as well as the contents! If you don't have a dishwasher, you can wash the containers in hot, soapy water and rinse, then sterilize the jars by boiling them 10 minutes, and keep the jars in hot water until they are used.

NOTE: If unsterilized jars are used, the product should be processed for 5 more minutes. However, since this additional processing can result in a poor set (runny jam), it's better to sterilized the jars.

Put the lids into a pan of boiling water for 5 minutes, and use the magnetic "lid lifter wand" to pull them out. Leave the jars in the dishwasher on "heated dry" until you are ready to use them. Keeping them hot will prevent the jars from breaking when you fill them with the hot jam.

Step 3 - Wash and hull the strawberries!

I'm sure you can figure out how to wash the fruit in plain cold water.

With strawberries you must remove the hulls (green parts), and the slice the berries into halves (for small berries) quarters for large berries. .



Step 4 - Peel and chop the figs

You need to cut off the stems and the bottom of the fig, but you do not need to peel them - you CAN peel them if you want to. I only peel the grody* looking ones (example photo below) or those with thick skins.

(* knarly, gross, yucky)



At left, sample figs with unappealing peels (skins). If the skin looks fine, I chop it up, but if the skins are tough, think or unappealing like these...



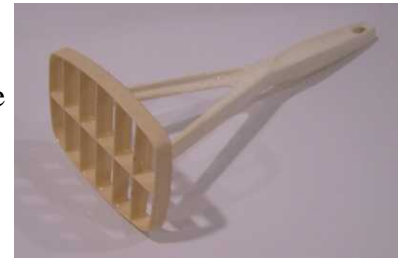
At left is a sample slice of a perfectly ripe but not over-ripe fig. It depends on the variety, but generally, they should be pink/yellowish and not brown inside....

I peel ----->





Some recipes call for the figs to sit in boiling water for 5 to 15 minutes to "check or tenderize the skins. Since the skins have no flavor, I'd rather remove them if they are thick or tough... otherwise, just chop them up along with the rest of the fig.



You'll need 3 cups. You can chop them up more, if you like, but I find they soften and break up during cooking, and if I want smaller pieces, I just use a sharp-edged plastic potato masher (shown at right) to mush them while cooking)

You should now have 3 cups of sliced strawberries and 3 cups of chopped figs!



Step 5 - Measure out the sugar

If you are using low or no-sugar pectin, you should only need 2 and 1/4 cups of sugar. With regular pectin, about 4 cups of sugar. Mix the dry pectin with about 1/4 cup of sugar and keep this separate from the rest of the sugar. This helps to keep the pectin from clumping up and allows it to mix better!

If you would rather try to make jam with no added sugar, just substitute 1 cup of white grape or peach juice for the sugar. You could also use 1 cup of Splenda instead of the sugar!



Step 6 - Mix the berries and figs with the pectin and cook to a full boil



Combine the berries and figs in a large pot. Stir the pectin into the berry/fig mixture. Put the pot on the stove over medium to high heat (stir often enough to prevent burning). It should take about 5 to 10 minutes to get it to a full boil (the kind that can not be stirred away).

Why use pectin? You may run into grandmotherly types who sniff "I never used pectin!" at you. Well, sure, and their generation took a horse and buggy to work, died of smallpox and ate canned meat and green beans that tastes like wet newspapers. Old fashioned ways are not always better nor healthier. Pectin, which occurs naturally in fruit, is what makes the jam "set" or thicken. The pectin you buy is just natural apple pectin, more concentrated. Using pectin dramatically reduces the

cooking time, which helps to preserve the vitamins and flavor of the fruit, and uses much less added sugar. But, hey, if you want to stand there and stir for hours, cooking the flavor away, who am I to stop you! :) Having said that, there are some fruits that have naturally high amounts of pectin ([see this page for a list](#)) and they simply don't need much or even any padded pectin.



Notes about pectin: I usually add about 20% more pectin (just open another pack and add a little) or else the jam is runnier than I like. With a little practice, you'll find out exactly how much pectin to get the thickness you like.

Is your jam too runny? Pectin enables you to turn out perfectly set jam every time. Made from natural apples, there are also low-sugar pectins that allow you to reduce the sugar you add by almost half!

[Get it here at BETTER prices!](#)

Step 7 - Get the lids sterilizing



If you haven't done so already, put the lids into a pan of hot water (barely simmering) for at least several minutes; to soften up the gummed surface and clean the lids.

Step 8 - Add the remaining sugar and bring to a boil



When the berry-pectin mix has reached a full boil (photo at left), add the rest of the sugar (about 2 cups of sugar per 6 cup batch of berries - OR the 1 cup of fruit juice OR the 1 cup of Splenda) and then



Step 9 - return to a full, hard boil for 1 minute

... bring it back to a boil and boil hard for 1 minute. Remove from the heat.

Step 10 - Skim any excessive foam



Foam... What is it? Just jam with a lot of air from the boiling. But it tastes more like, well, foam, than jam, so most people remove it. It is harmless, though. Some people add 1 teaspoon of butter or margarine to the mix in step 6 to reduce foaming, but food experts debate whether that may contribute to earlier spoilage, so I usually omit it and skim.



But save the skimmed foam! You can recover jam from it to use fresh! [See this page for directions!](#)

Step 11 - Testing for "jell" (thickness)



I keep a metal tablespoon sitting in a glass of ice water, then take a half spoonful of the mix and let it cool to room temperature on the spoon. If it thickens up to the consistency I like, then I know the jam is ready. If not, I mix in a little more pectin (about 1/4 to 1/2 of another package) and bring it to a boil again for 1 minute.

Notes about "set" (thickening or jell): It takes 3 ingredients for jams and jellies to set: pectin, sugar and acidity. The amount of pectin that is naturally occurring in the fruit varies from one type of fruit to another and by ripeness (counter intuitively, unripe contains more pectin). [See this page](#) for more about pectin in fruit. It takes the right balance, and sufficient amounts of each of pectin, sugar and acidity to

result in a firm jam or jelly. Lastly, it takes a brief period (1 minute) of a hard boil, to provide enough heat to bring the three together. Generally speaking, if your jam doesn't firm up, you were short in pectin, sugar or acidity or didn't get a hard boil. That's ok - you can "remake" the jam; see [this page!](#)

Step 12 - Optional: Let stand for 5 minutes and stir completely.

Why? Otherwise, the fruit will often float to the top of the jar. This isn't a particular problem; you can always stir the jars later when you open them; but some people get fussy about everything being "just so", so I've included this step! Skipping this step won't affect the quality of the jam at all. I usually don't bother.

You'll also notice that the less sugar you use, the more the fruit will float (chemists will tell you it is due to the decreased density of the solution!)



Step 13 - Fill the jars and put the lid and rings on



Fill them to within 1/4 inch of the top, wipe any spilled jam off the top, seat the lid and tighten the ring around them. Then put them into the boiling water canner!

This is where the jar tongs come in really handy!



Step 12 - Process the jars in the boiling water bath

Keep the jars covered with at least 1 inch of water. Keep the water boiling. In general, boil them for 10 minutes, which is what SureJell (the makers of the pectin) recommend. I say "in general" because you have to process (boil) them longer at higher altitudes than sea level, or



if you use larger jars, or if you did not sterilize the jars and lids right before using them. The directions inside every box of pectin will tell you exactly. The directions on the pectin tend to be pretty conservative. Clemson University says you only need to process them for 5 minutes. I usually hedge my bets and start pulling them out after 5 minutes, and the last jars were probably in for 10. I rarely have a jar spoil, so it must work. But you don't want to process them too long, or the jam will turn dark and get runny. See the chart below for altitude adjustment to processing times, if you are not in the sea level to 1,000ft above sea level range.

Note: Some people don't even boil the jars; they just ladle it hot into hot jars, put the lids and rings on and invert them, but putting the jars in the boiling water bath REALLY helps to reduce spoilage! To me, it makes little sense to put all the working into making the jam and then not to process the jars to be sure they don't spoil!

Recommended process time for jams in a boiling water canner.				
		Process Time at Altitudes of		
Style of Pack	Jar Size	0 - 1,000 ft	1,001 - 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Hot	Half-pints or Pints	5 min	10	15

Step 13 - Remove and cool the jars - Done!



Lift the jars out of the water with your jar lifter tongs and let them cool without touching or bumping them in a draft-free place (usually takes overnight) You can then remove the rings if you like.

Once cooled, they're ready to store. I find they last up to 12 months. But after about 6 to 8 months, they get darker in color and start to get runny. They still are safe to eat, but the flavor and texture aren't as good. So eat them in the first 6 months after you prepare them! Another trick is to keep the uncooked berries or other fruit in the freezer and make and can the jam as needed, so it's always fresh.

Other Equipment:

From left to right:

1. Jar lifting tongs
to pick up hot jars
2. Lid lifter
- to remove lids from the pot
of boiling water (sterilizing)
3. Lid
- disposable - you may only
use them once
4. Ring
- holds the lids on the jar until
after
the jars cool - then you don't
need them
5. Canning jar funnel
- to fill the jars



You can get all of the tools in a kit here:

