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How to Make Homemade Watermelon Jelly

Making and canning your own watermelon jelly is quite easy. Here's how to do it, in 10 easy steps and completely illustrated.

Safety: This is an unusual recipe; all the recipes I publish come from lab tested sources. This one doesn't. So why would I publish it? Simply because I use the exact same recipe, which is test, to make pickled watermelon rinds, and simply puree the flesh instead. And still acidify it in the same way, to the same extent,

But this is what the University of Wisconsin Extension Service says on the subject:

Watermelon is an unusual fruit because it is not acidic. Most fruits - peaches, pears, apples, and oranges are good examples - are high in acid, they have a pH of 4.6 or below. Melons (honey dew, watermelon, and cantaloupe) are an exception to this. Melons have an average pH of 6.2, they are low in acid. Because they are low in acid, they cannot be safely canned in a boiling water canner unless the product is significantly changed by adding a lot of acid or sugar. The amount of acid added to jams and jellies to help pectin to gel is not enough to ensure the safety of watermelon jelly. And no tests have been done to indicate just how much sugar would be needed for a safe jelly.

To answer the consumer's question, despite what the internet may say, there are no safe, tested recipes for watermelon jelly.

Notice even they say that it would have to be significantly altered adding a lot of acid or sugar. We add both. However, I will repeat that this is NOT a lab tested recipe, so to be cautious, you may want to store it in the refrigerator, even after canning.

Ingredients

- 4 cups chopped up watermelon (without the seeds or rind) . That is a full 4 cups, liquid and all, no air spaces.
- 3 1/2 cups sugar
- 1.5 cups lemon juice
- 1.5 packages of dry **no-sugar needed pectin**

Equipment

- jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at Wal-Mart)
- At least 1 large pot
- Jelly strainer (see step 6) or cheesecloth
- Large spoons and ladles
- Ball jars (Publix, Wal-Mart carry them - about \$8 per dozen quart jars including the lids and rings)
- 1 Water Bath Canner (a huge pot with a lifting rack to sterilize the jars of watermelon jelly after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, Wal-Mart) You **CAN** use a large pot instead, but the canners are deeper, and have a rack top make lifting the jars out easier. If you plan on canning every year, they're worth the investment.
- Vegetable / fruit peeler (\$1.99 at the grocery store)

Recipe and Directions

Step 1 - Selecting the watermelons

The most important step! You need watermelons that are sweet and ripe, but not overripe and mushy. Any color will work,. You can mix different colors, if you like.



Step 2 - Wash, cut and dice the watermelons!

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



Then, cut the watermelons open and start scooping out the contents. Ideally, you make small 1 inch balls, cubes or chunks. Those will blend up easily in your blender or food processor.

If you do this on a cutting board inside a baking tray. it will help you to collect the liquid to use. The rind may be used in making watermelon rind pickles (see this page, but the seeds are useless, except for planting or spitting at each other.



Step 3 - Puree the watermelon!



Place diced watermelon in a blender or food processor.

Cover and blend or process until smooth.

It should reduce to approximately 2 cups of watermelon puree. If you have less than 2 cups, blend up some more watermelon. You'll need 2 cups of blended watermelon in total.

Pour the 2 cups of blended watermelon into a large pot.

Step 4 - Add lemon juice

Add the 1.5 cups of lemon juice to the pot!

Step 5 - Mix the dry pectin with about 1/4 cup of sugar or other sweetener



In a small bowl, mix the dry pectin with about 1/4 cup of sugar (or other sweetener). Keep this separate from the rest of the sugar.



Notes about pectin: For watermelon jelly, I usually add about 50% more pectin (just open another pack and add a little) or else the jelly is runnier than I like. With a little practice, you'll find out exactly how much pectin to get the thickness you like.

For more about the [types of pectin sold, see this page!](#)



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

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Step 6 - Mix the watermelon juice with the pectin and cook to a full boil



Stir the pectin into the watermelon juice and put the mix in a big 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 cannot be stirred away).

Step 7 - Add the remaining sugar and bring to a boil



When the berry-pectin mix has reached a full boil, add the rest of the sugar

and then bring it back to a boil and boil hard for 1 minute. Depending upon which type of jam you're making (sugar, no-sugar, Splenda, mix of sugar and Splenda or fruit juice) you will need to use a different amount of sugar and type of pectin.



The precise measurements are found in directions inside each and every box of pectin sold (every brand, Ball, Kerr, Mrs. Wages, etc. has directions inside). I haven't seen a jelly recipe that uses only Splenda, and I haven't yet tried it.

You don't need this for watermelon jelly, unless you want to be sure to remove every seed and bit. For that, it's quite helpful.



Step 8 - 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.

Step 9 - Fill the jars and put the lid and rings on

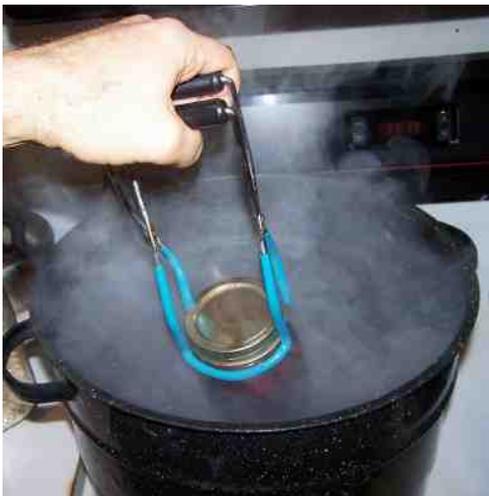


Fill them to within 1/4 inch of the top, wipe any spilled jam off the top, seat the lid and tighten the ring around them. Then put them into the boiling water canner!

This is where the jar tongs and lid lifter come in really handy!



Step 10 - 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 7 minutes, and the last jars were probably in for 10. I rarely have a jar spoil, so it must work.

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, (this is called "open kettle" processing). Open kettle process is universally condemned by all of the authorities (USDA, FDA, Universities - Clemson, UGa, Minnesota, WI, Michigan, etc.,) as being inherently dangerous and conducive to botulism. It does not create a sterile environment; it does create the ideal environment for botulism to grow.

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 or risk your family's health.!

Step 11 - Remove and cool the jars - Done!



Lift the jars out of the water 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 the jars are cool, you can check that they are sealed verifying that the lid has been sucked down. Just press in the center, gently, with your finger. If it it pops up and down (often making a popping sound), it is not sealed. If you put the jar in the refrigerator right away, you can still use it. Some people replace the lid and reprocess the jar, the that's a bit iffy. If you heat the contents back up, re-jar them (with a new lid) and the full time in the canner, it's usually ok.

Once cooled, they're ready to store. I find they last up to 12 months. **AGAIN** best stored in the refrigerator for safety! 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!

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 and keep the rims clean.

