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How to Make Homemade Peach Butter - Easily!

You think making and canning your own peach butter is difficult? Well, it used to be! Until crock pots and slow cookers came along!



Now, it's easy! Here's how to do it, complete instructions in easy steps and completely illustrated. The peach butter will taste MUCH better than anything you've ever had from a store.

Prepared this way, the jars have a shelf life of 18 months to 2 years, and require no special attention. A side benefit is that your house will smell wonderful while it is cooking - much better than potpourri!

Ingredients and Equipment

- Peaches (See step 1)
- Cinnamon
- Cloves
- Allspice
- Jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Lid lifter (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sterilize them. (\$2 at WalMart)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at Walmart)
- 1 Crock pot (slow cooker)
- Large spoons and ladles
- 1 Canner (a huge pot to sterilize the jars of peach butter after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at WalMart (seasonal item))
- Ball jars (Publix, WalMart carry them - about \$8 per dozen quart jars including the lids and rings)

Peach Butter Recipe and Directions

Step 1 - Selecting the peaches, plums, cherries or nectarines

The most important step! You need peaches that are sweet, and to make the work easier, cling-free (also called freestone). This means that the peach separates easily from the pit! Same with nectarines, and this doesn't apply to cherries or plums.

Choose ripe, mature fruit. They should not be mushy, but they also should not be rock hard: just as ripe as you would eat them fresh. Green, unripe peaches will soften but will not ripen, nor have the flavor of tree-ripe peaches.

After this step, I'll just refer to "peaches" but it applies to plums, cherries and nectarines.



Step 2 - How many peaches and where to get them

You can pick your own, or buy them at the grocery store. For very large quantities (more than a few bushels), you'll find that real* farmer's markets, like the Farmer's Market in Forest Park, Georgia have them at the best prices.

It takes about 5 good sizes peaches or nectarines (or about 10 plums) to make one quart of prepared peaches. And each quart of prepared peaches cooks down to about 1 pint of peach butter.

So that means you'll need about 5 large peaches per pint of peach butter that you want to make!

Step 3 - Wash the peaches!

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



Step 4 - Peeling the Peaches

Nope, we're not going to peel them by hand; that's way too much work. Instead, here's a great trick that works with many fruits and vegetables with skins (like tomatoes): just dip the fruit in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds. Remove from the water using a slotted spoon and put into a large bowl or pot of cold water and ice. The skins will easily slide off now!



In boiling water for 60 seconds,



then in cold water for 2 min.



Nectarines do not need to be peeled, if you don't mind the skins.

Step 5 - Cut up and blend the peaches

Cut out any brown spots and mushy areas. Cut the peaches in half, or quarters or slices, as you prefer! Remove pits!

If you want REALLY smooth peach butter, run the cut up peaches through your food processor or blender until they are pureed!



Step 6 - Fill the crock pot



Fill the crock pot to within an inch of full with the peaches. My crockpot holds about 5.5 quarts. Now, you CAN do this using a regular large pot on very low heat on the stove, but the crockpot works much better, because its heat is very low. I've never had a batch burn in the crockpot.

Step 7 -Add the spices and sweetener of your choice

Add:

- 2 tablespoons of ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon of allspice
- 4 cups sugar (or other sweetener)

The sweetener can be sugar, Splenda, fruit juice (peach juice or white grape juice work well) or none at all! Generally, a fruit butter, like peach butter is a fairly sweet concoction, so you might want to add some sweetening. I usually add about 2 cups of sugar and 2 cups of Splenda, so it's sweet, but not loaded with sugar.

Step 8 - Cook the Peach butter

Set the crock pot on low or medium heat.

Cover it loosely or use a large pot splatter-guard. It will spatter as it boils slowly, so I also cover nearby surfaces with towels. You don't want to seal it tightly because you want the steam to escape so it can reduce in volume and thicken.

Leave it to cook for 6 - 12 hours. How long depends on the size and power of your crockpot, and how thick you like it, If you want to stir it occasionally, that's fine but not necessary. I let mine go overnight.

It will reduce in volume by about half overnight.



Step 9 - 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.

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 peach butter.

Put the lids into a pan of boiling water for 5 minutes, and use the magnetic "lid lifter wand" to pull them out.



Step 10 - Blend the peach butter (optional)

You want a smooth, creamy texture, right? If the peach butter is not as smooth as you'd like, just use a hand-held drink blender. It does a great job for finishing it up!



Tips:

- **Too thick?** if the peach butter cooks down too much or is too thick for your liking, just add a little bit of peach juice and blend it in.
- **Not thick enough?** Just let it cook some more, with the lid off so the steam can escape!

Step 7 - Fill the jars



Fill them to within 1/4 inch of the top, wipe any spilled peach butter of the top, seat the lid and tighten the ring around them. Put them in the canner and keep them covered with at least 1 inch of water and boiling. if you are at sea level (up to 1,000 ft) boil pint jars for 5 minutes and quart jars for 10 min. If you are at an altitude of 1,000 feet or more, see the chart below..

Recommended process time for Peach Butter 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
	Quarts	10	15	20

Step 11 - 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.

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

