

Refrigerator Pickles

Making your own jam or jelly is a delightful way to preserve fruits and enjoy their flavors year-round. Often homemade jams and jellies include the use of store-bought pectin, a thickening agent that helps the fruit achieve its thick, semi-solid consistency. Both lemons and apples contain unusually high amounts of pectin. They can be incorporated into jam recipes instead of store-bought pectin. This Low Sugar Strawberry Jam recipe uses natural pectin.

Tools:

- 8 oz jelly jars
- Canning lids and bands
- Knife (to remove hulls from strawberries and to slice them)
- Zester
- Large pot
- Water Bath Canner (available many places including Walmart and Amazon)
- Canning funnel (to aid in filling the jars)
- Ladle (to keep pouring into the jars more controlled)
- Jar lifter (invaluable when water bath canning)
- Towel (to place jars on)
- White Vinegar
- Kitchen towel

Ingredients:

- 8 cups Strawberries (preferably fresh, but frozen can be used; but will require longer cooking time due to the additional water in the frozen berries)
- 3 cups Sugar
- Lemon zest from 2 lemons
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- (or substitute 1 apple for the lemon)

Steps:

1. Wash jars in hot soapy water, rinse, and keep warm.

2. Fill water bath canner with water and put on medium heat.
3. Rinse strawberries.
4. Remove hulls from the strawberries. You can slice them to aid in mashing or just put the whole berries in the cooking pot. Mash with a potato masher if you prefer larger bits in your jam. Puree in a blender first for a smoother jam.
5. Add the lemon zest, lemon juice, and sugar to the pot. Stir until well combined and sugar is completely dissolved. Bring to a boil, continually stirring to prevent scorching.
6. Reduce to a low boil for approximately 20 minutes (time varies according to the water content of the berries) until the jam sets. *Option 1: Candy Thermometer* – Jam sets at 220 degrees. *Option 2: Sheetting Test* – Put a metal spoon in the freezer when you begin to make the jam. Take a spoonful of the jam mixture and watch how it drips off the spoon: Little individual drops – Not ready. Big gobs – Almost ready. It falls off the spoon in a sheet (or doesn't move at all) – READY! Immediately take off the heat.
7. Place warm jars on towel on the counter surface.
8. Using the canning funnel and ladle, fill the jars until there is 1/4" headspace (from the top of the jar to the top of the jam).
9. Moisten the kitchen towel with white vinegar. Wipe the rims of the jars. Place the lids and bands on the jars and tighten the bands "finger tight."
10. Using the jar lifter, place the jars in the canning rack that is in the water bath canner. The water should cover the jars by 1-2 inches. Place the lid.
11. Bring the water bath canner to a boil. Once boiling, set the timer to 10 minutes.
12. When the time is up, turn off the heat. Wait 5 minutes.
13. Lay a towel, folded in thirds, on a counter in a draft-free area. Using the jar lifter, carefully transfer the jars from the canner to the towel.
14. Let the jars sit for at least 12 hours. Check the seals by pressing on the center of the lids. If the lid gives, place the jar in the refrigerator to eat first. If the lid is sealed, wipe the jar and lid with a kitchen towel moistened with white vinegar and store in a dark area for up to a year.

Added note: When you prepare to use a stored jar of jam, always test the seal to be sure it is held. If it hasn't, do not use.