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How to Make Strawberry-Rhubarb Jam - Easily!

With Step-by-step Directions, Photos, Ingredients, Recipe and Costs!

Yield: 7 to 9 pint jars



Making and canning your own strawberry-rhubarb jam is also quite easy. Just scroll down this page to see how to do it, in easy steps and completely illustrated. I've got some other pages for specific types of jam and butters, too, [see this page](#)

Ingredients

- **Strawberries** - preferably fresh, but frozen (without syrup) works, too. A batch requires 4 cups of crushed berries, so you'll need about 1½ quart boxes of raw whole strawberries.
- **Rhubarb** - 2 cups cooked red-stalked rhubarb (about 2 pounds rhubarb chopped and cooked in ¼ cup water)
- 4 to 6½ cups **sugar or honey** (or a 50-50 Stevia, my preference (or if you prefer, Splenda)/sugar blend)
- **Lemon juice** - 1/4 cup
- **Pectin** (it's a natural product, made from apples and available at grocery stores (season - spring through late summer) and local "big box" stores. It usually goes for about \$2.00 to \$2.50 per box. You'll get best results with no-sugar needed pectin, whether you choose to add sugar or not! [See here for more information about how to choose the type of pectin to use.](#)

Equipment

- **Jar funnel** (\$2 at Target, other big box stores, and often grocery stores; and available online - see this page) 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 sanitize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at big box stores and grocery stores.). **Ball jars** (Grocery stores, like Publix, Kroger, Safeway carry them, as do some big box stores - 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:

- **Foley Food Mill** (\$25) - not necessary; useful if you want to remove seeds (from blackberries) or [make applesauce](#).
- **Lid lifter** (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sanitize them. (\$2 at big box stores or it comes in the kit at left)
- **Jar grabber** (to pick up the hot jars)- Big box stores and grocery stores sometimes carry them; and it is available online - see this page. It's a tremendously useful to put jars 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:



Strawberry-Rhubarb Jam-making Directions

This example shows you how to make either strawberry-rhubarb jam. The yield from this recipe is about 8 eight-ounce jars (which is the same as 4 pints).

Step 1 - Pick the strawberries and rhubarb! (or buy them already picked)

It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality ones! See this page for [strawberry facts and picking tips](#)

At right is a picture of a typical strawberry field.

I prefer to grow my own; which is really easy - but that does take some space and time and can be challenging.

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

Above and at left are strawberries and blackberries 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?

Strawberry-rhubarb jam can ONLY be made in rather small batches -about 4 to 6 cups 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.

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; especially if it has a "sanitize" cycle, the water bath processing will sanitize them as well as the contents! If you don't have a dishwasher with a sanitize cycle, you can wash the containers in hot, soapy water and rinse, then sanitize the jars by boiling them 10 minutes, and keep the jars in hot water until they are used.



NOTE: If unsanitized 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 sanitize the jars.

Put the lids into a pan of hot, but not quite boiling water (that's what the manufacturer's recommend) 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 the rhubarb and strawberries!

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



Step 4 - Cut up the rhubarb and remove the strawberry hulls

Rhubarb varieties differ - if the type you have has a tough outer skin, peel it off. You can tell if it is tough if it peels off easily as a thin skin. Generally, you do not need to peel the rhubarb.

You'll then need to remove the ends of the rhubarb - the tough part that connects to the plant (as show at left) and then dice the stalks into 1/2 inch pieces.



The strawberries only need to have the hulls removed and if they are very large, cut them in half.



Step 5 - Cook the rhubarb

Add water, cover, and simmer until rhubarb is tender (about 1 or 2 minutes after it starts to boil).

Step 6 - Crush the strawberries

Then you just mush them up a bit - not completely crushed, but mostly. Most people seem to like large chunks of fruit but crushing them releases the natural pectin so it can thicken. You'll need about 4 cups, mashed up.

If you want seedless jam, you may need to run the crushed berries through a food mill (below). The Villaware has a



selection of screens, including a fine screen that works on strawberries. The

Foley stops blackberries seeds, but most raspberry and all strawberry seeds pass through. They cost between \$25 to \$60.

Step 7 - Measure out the sugar, honey or other sweetener.

You'll need 4 cups of sugar (or about the same of honey). You can make a strawberry-rhubarb jam with no added sugar if you use the "No-added sugar pectin" but honestly, the resultant jam just isn't as good. It tends to be darker, more runny and less flavorful. But using the no-added sugar pectin with a reduced amount of sugar, about 4 cups instead of the usual 7 cups, works GREAT!



After measuring the sugar, set 1/4 cup aside to mix separately with the pectin in the next step.

If you would rather try to make [jam with no added sugar, click here](#) for those directions!

Step 8 - Mix the rhubarb and strawberries with the lemon juice and pectin and cook to a full boil

Strawberries and rhubarb don't contain much natural pectin, so you need to add a package and a half of the boxed pectin, or the jam will be pretty runny. Mix the dry pectin with about 1/4 cup of sugar and Keep this separate from the rest of the sugar. If you are not using sugar, you'll just have to stir more vigorously to prevent the pectin



from clumping. This helps to keep the pectin from clumping up and allows it to mix better!

Stir the pectin into the berries, add the 1/4 cup of lemon juice (which helps make a good gel and reduces spoilage) 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).

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 (together with sugars and acids in the fruit). 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 any padded pectin.

Notes about pectin: I usually add about 50% 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.

Another tip: as mentioned above, use the lower sugar or no-sugar pectin. You can add sugar to either and it cuts the amount of sugar you need from 7 cups per batch to 4 cups or less! And it tastes even better! On the other hand; I have never had success with the No-sugar pectin without adding ANY sugar. It always turned out runny and bland. You might want to try using the low sugar or no-



sugar recipe with a mixture of sugar and Stevia, my preference (or if you prefer, Splenda); sugar and white grape juice, or just white grape juice - that will cut down the sugar, but still preserve the flavor.

Step 9 - Get the lids warming in hot (but not boiling) water

Lids: put the lids into a pan of hot water for at least several minutes; to soften up the gummed surface and clean the lids.



Step 10 - Add the remaining sugar and bring to a boil again for 1 minute

When the berry-pectin mix has reached a full boil, add the rest of the sugar (about 4 cups of sugar per 6 cup batch of berries) and then bring it back to a boil and boil hard for 1 minute... If you bring it back to a full boil fairly slowly (on medium heat rather than high) that will help reduce foaming.

Remove from the heat.



Step 11 - 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, that 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 12 - 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 13 - 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 14 - Fill the jars and put the lid and rings on

Fill them to within $\frac{1}{4}$ -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!



Step 15 - Process the jars in the boiling water bath

This is where the jar tongs come in really handy!

Keep the jars covered with at least 2 inches of water. Keep the water boiling. In general, boil them for 10 minutes, which is what ureJell (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 sanitize 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 16 - 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, but if you leave them on, at least loosen them quite a bit, so they don't rust in place due to trapped moisture. 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 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, then 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. 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.

Summary - 2010 Cost of Making Homemade Strawberry-Rhubarb jam - makes 8 jars, 8 oz each**

Item	Quantity	Cost in 2009	Source	Subtotal
fresh whole berries (strawberries)	1½ quarts	\$10.00/gallon	Pick your own	\$3.00
Rhubarb	2 lbs	\$5.00	farm or grocery	\$5.00
Canning jars (8 oz size), includes lids and rings	8 jars	\$7.50/dozen Lids alone are about \$1.25 per dozen	Grocery stores, like Public, Kroger, Safeway and sometimes, Big Lots, local hardware stores and big box stores	\$5.00
Sweetener - see step 4	4 cups	\$1.75	Grocery stores, like Public, Kroger, Safeway and sometimes, Big Lots, local hardware stores and big box stores	\$1.75
Pectin (no-sugar, low sugar or regular, dry)	1 and a third boxes *	\$1.50 per box	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sure-Jell Premium Fruit Pectin, Light (No-sugar needed), 2. MCP Premium Fruit Pectin, 3. Pomona low Sugar Pectin, 1 oz. Box local "big box" stores, sometimes Big Lots and local hardware stores, and usually grocery stores, like Publix, Kroger	\$2.00
Total				\$16.75 total or about \$2.10 per jar (if you already have the jars, and just need new lids)

* pectin use varies - blackberry jam needs very little, raspberry a little more, strawberry the most.

** - This assumes you already have the pots, pans, ladles, and reusable equipment. Note that you can reuse the jars! Many products are sold in jars that will take the lids and rings for canning. For example, Classico Spaghetti sauce is in quart sized jars that work with Ball and Kerr lids and rings- some authorities do not recommend these, saying they are more prone to break, and while I have found that is true of mayonnaise jars, I have found the Classico spaghetti jars to be pretty sturdy.