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How to Make Homemade Apple Jelly

Making and canning your own apple jelly is quite easy. Here's how to do it, in 13 easy steps and completely illustrated. These directions work equally well for pear, peach, nectarine, plum and apricot jellies. For [jam of these fruit](#), see this page; or see [this page for berry jams](#), [this page for Fig Jam](#) and [this page for Blueberry Jam](#) directions!

Also, see our pages on [tips for picking apples at a farm](#), easy illustrated directions to make [applesauce](#), [apple butter](#) and [apple pie](#); and our [list of apple festivals](#)!

Ingredients

- 6 lbs. of apples to yield about 6 cups of apple juice (see step 1) OR 6 cups of apple juice (skip to step 7)
- Water (in which to cook the apples). about 3 or 4 cups of water. You can cook them in apple juice for a more intense apple flavor)
- Sweetener: sugar, no-sugar, Stevia (or if you prefer, Splenda), mix of sugar and Stevia (or if you prefer, Splenda) or fruit juice - see step 7
- Cinnamon (optional!) I like 1/2 teaspoon per batch
- Pectin: Apples normally have sufficient natural pectin in them to form a gel, but I have found adding a half packet of dry no-sugar-needed pectin yields a more reliable set, and can substantially reduce or eliminate the need to add sugar.

Equipment

- Jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores, but it's usually cheaper online from our affiliates)
- At least 1 large pot
- Jelly strainer (see step 6) or cheesecloth
- Large spoons and ladles
- Ball jars (Publix, Kroger, other grocery stores and some "big box" stores 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 sanitize the jars of apple jelly after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores, but it's usually cheaper online from our affiliates) 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 apples



The most important step! You need apples that are sweet - NOT something like Granny Smith's. Yeah, I know you like them (why do sweet women like sour apples???) and even if I did, they still wouldn't make good apple jelly - you'd have to add a lot of sugar.

Instead, choose apples that are naturally sweet, like Red Delicious, Gala, Fuji, Rome and always use a mixture - never just one type. This year I used 4 bushels of red delicious and one each of Fuji, Yellow Delicious, Gala and Rome. This meant it was so sweet I

did not need to add any sugar at all. And the flavor is great! The Fuji's and Gala's give it an aromatic flavor!

You can also start with apple juice or apple cider (fresh, canned or frozen) - just use a type that does not have added sweeteners. You'll need 6 cups of apple juice and then skip to step 7.

Step 2 - How many apples and where to get them

You can pick your own, or buy them at the grocery store. But for large quantities, you'll find that real farmer's markets, like the [State Farmer's Market in Forest Park, Georgia](#) have them at the best prices. In 2007, they were available from late September at \$14 to \$24 per bushel.

You'll get about 14 quarts of apple jelly per bushel of apples.

Step 3 - Wash and peel the apples!

I'm sure you can figure out how to wash the apples in plain cold water and remove any stickers or labels on them.

Using a vegetable peeler or a paring knife, peel the apples.

Note: You CAN use a juicer, if you have one. In which case, just wash and chop the apples as the directions with your juicer require, juice the apples and skip to step 7. Juicing results in clearly jelly, if that matters to you.



Step 4 - Chop the apples!

Chopping them is much faster if you use one of those apple corer/segmenters - you just push it down on an apple and it cuts it into segments.



Using a paring knife, be sure to remove any seeds, hard parts (usually the part around the seeds) and any mush or dark areas.



Step 5 - Cook the Apples

Pretty simple! Put about 3 or 4 cups of water (I use filtered tap water) on the bottom of a huge, thick-bottomed pot. (about 2 inches of water in the pot). How much water to use is not an exact science, since some varieties of apples are much more juicy, and even the same variety varies depending upon the weather.



Honeycrisp, Delicious and Gala, for example, tend to be juicy/ watery; while most baking apples, like Rome, tend to be drier and require more water.

Put the lid on, and the heat on high. When it gets really going, turn it to medium high until the apples are soft through and through.

Yes, this picture shows skins (I didn't have a photo of this step with peeled apples) and you *CAN* leave the skins on; it just clogs up the strainer more and takes more time. On the plus side, leaving on the skins usually imparts a little more flavor, plus the color of the skins to the finished jelly!

Step 6 - Sieve the cooked apples

You can either put the soft cooked apples through a jelly strainer (about \$9.00, see ordering at right, or pour them through cheesecloth in a colander. Or if you don't mind chunky jelly, just let the juice stand for 20 minutes, and decant (pour off) the clear liquid to use and leave the solids behind.



I pointed out in the ingredients list that you could start with apple juice, store bought or your own. Either way, you'll need about 6 cups of juice now.

Step 7 - Measure out the sweetener

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, has directions inside). I haven't seen a jelly recipe that uses only Splenda. I suspect it would taste bland.

Type of jam	Type of pectin to buy	Sweetener
regular	regular	7 cups of sugar
lower sugar	lower-sugar	4.5 cups of sugar
lowest sugar	no-sugar	4 cups of Splenda
lower sugar	lower-sugar or no-sugar	2 cups sugar and 2 cups of Splenda
no sugar	no-sugar	4 cups of Splenda
natural	no-sugar	3 cups fruit juice (grape, peach, apple or mixed)

Step 8 - 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: I always use "no-sugar-needed pectin" as it is more consistent and reliable and 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.

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 apples, there are also low-sugar pectins that allow you to reduce the sugar you add by almost half!

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Step 9 - Mix the apple juice with the pectin and cook to a full boil

Stir the pectin into the apple 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 can not be stirred away).



Step 10 - Add the remaining sugar and bring to a boil

When the apple-pectin mix has reached a full boil, add the rest of the sugar (or other sweetener) and then bring it back to a boil and boil hard for 1 minute.



Step 10 - 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. (yes, I know the jam on the spoon in the photo is red - that was from making strawberry jam, but aside from the color, it should look the same).



Step 11 - 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 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 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 13 - 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 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!



Other Equipment:

From left to right:

1. Jar lifting tongs
helpful to pick up hot jars
2. Lid lifter
- to remove lids from the pot of hot water
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

