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Where you can find a pick-your-own farm near you!

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See www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm for many other canning directions and recipes

How to Make Homemade Fig-Strawberry Jam with Jello (Gelatin) - Easily!

Making and canning your own strawberry-fig jam with jello is quite easy. Here's how to do it, in 11 easy steps and completely illustrated. The fig and strawberry combination is a perfect match: the sweetness of figs coupled with the tartness and aromatic flavor of strawberries is ideal, allowing you to use much less sugar or even go sugarless! This recipe is all-natural, using fresh or frozen strawberries and figs. If you want to make [strawberry-fig jam without gelatin \(my preference\) click here for that recipe.](#)



Ingredients and Equipment

- **Fruit** - preferably fresh figs and strawberries, but frozen (without added sugar or syrup works, too) You'll need 3 cups of figs and 1 cup of strawberries, in total, of prepared (peeled, chopped) fruit. You may use frozen fruit! Some people skip the
- **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

strawberries.

- **Gelatin (Strawberry flavored Jello)** -(it's a natural product, made from... well, you probably don't want to know... [if you do, click here](#)). Most of us know it by its brand name, Jello. 2 packages (3 oz. each) of strawberry gelatin are what you need. You could use regular or sugarless type of Jello.
 - **Sugar** - 3 cups of dry, granulated (table) sugar. I haven't tried making it without adding sugar, so I can't tell you if it would still set if you omitted the sugar and just added 1 cup of honey, 1 cup of juice (white grape or peach work best), 1 cup Splenda or about 1/3 cup of Splenda instead of sugar. Sugar isn't used for its preservative properties, so safety shouldn't be compromised, but the appearance, flavor, set and
- the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at big box stores and grocery stores.). Note: [we sell canners and supplies here, too - at excellent prices](#) - and it helps support this web site!
- **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.

color most likely would suffer.

- **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:



Optional stuff:

- **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)

Jam-making Directions

Step 1 - Pick the figs and berries! (or buy them already picked)

It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality ones!

At right is a picture I took of Brown Turkey figs - they are plentiful in late August throughout the South. Other types of figs are fine, too. Strawberries are usually in season in May or June in most areas, so you may want to



http://www.pickyourown.org/fig_strawberry_jam_jello.htm

pick and freeze your strawberries (without sugar) and make this jam when the figs come in season. [See this page on freezing strawberries.](#)

I prefer to grow my own; which is really easy, especially for figs, strawberries can more challenging - but growing anything does take some space and time. That's



why we have pick-your-own farms!

As mentioned above; you may use frozen figs or berries (those with or without syrup or added sugar); which is especially useful if you want to make some jam in December to give away at Christmas!

Above and at left are strawberries 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?

Gelatin jams are made in rather small batches - about 3 or 4 cups of prepared fruit at a time - The gelatin doesn't set up well otherwise.

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 and hull the strawberries!

The old time recipe does not use any fresh strawberries; just the strawberry-flavored Jello. If you want to do that, you may omit the strawberries, and skip this step.

If you are using strawberries, I'm sure you can figure out how to wash the fruit in plain cold water.



With strawberries you must remove the hulls (green parts), and the slice the berries into halves (for small berries) quarters for large berries.

Step 4 - Peel and chop the figs

You need to cut off the stems and the bottom of the fig, but you do not need to peel them - you CAN peel them if you want to. I only peel the grody* looking ones (example photo below) or those with thick



skins.

(* knarly, gross, yucky)

At left, sample figs with unappealing peels (skins). If the skin looks fine, I chop it up, but if the skins are tough, think or unappealing like these...



At left is a sample slice of a perfectly ripe but not over-ripe fig. It depends on the variety, but generally, they should be pink/yellowish and not brown inside....

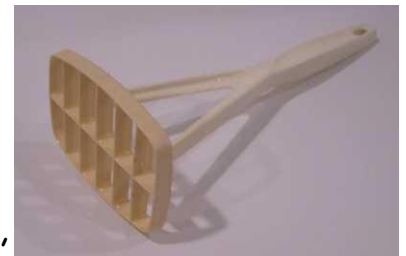
Some recipes call for the figs to sit in boiling water for 5 to 15 minutes to "check or tenderize the skins. Since the skins have no flavor, I'd rather remove them if they are thick or tough... otherwise, just chop them up along with the rest



of the fig. I do remove any stems and bruised spots.



You'll need 3 cups of the prepared (chopped) figs. You can chop them up more, if you like, but I find they soften and break up during cooking, and if I want smaller pieces, I just use a sharp-edged



plastic potato masher (shown at right) to mush them while cooking)

You should now have 1 cup of sliced strawberries and 3 cups of chopped figs! I suspect you could vary the ratio, as long as the total amount of fruit is 4 cups.

Step 5 - Measure out the sugar

You should only need 3 cups of sugar.

If you would rather try to make jam with no added sugar, you might want to try the other [strawberry-fig jam recipe using pectin](#) instead of gelatin. I haven't tried making the gelatin type without sugar; it might not set up, but I have tested the pectin type without sugar.



Step 6 - Get the lids warming in hot (but not boiling) water



If you haven't done so already, put the lids into a pan of hot water (barely simmering) for at least several minutes; to soften up the gummed surface and clean the lids.

Step 7 - Mix the sugar, jello, figs and strawberries and bring to a full boil

Combine the sugar, gelatin (jello) strawberries and figs in a large pot. Put the 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 8 - Lower the heat and boil for 3 to 5 more minutes

... Lower the heat and continue to boil for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring often!

Then remove from the heat.



Step 9 - Fill the jars with the hot jam 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!



This is where the jar tongs come in really handy!

Step 10 - Process the jars in the boiling water bath

Keep the jars covered with at least 2 inches of water. Keep the water boiling. In general, boil them for 5 to 10 minutes. 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. 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 11 - 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.

FAQS

- **A visitor writes on July 08, 2011:** "I used your recipe last year for strawberry pie filling. I am down to the last two jars and just canned some fresh filling. I noticed that the color of last years is more brown than red. Is it still good? I LOVE your website and refer to it constantly! Robin Howard

Answer: Yes, over time, the color usually darkens and the jam gets a bit more runny, but if it is still sealed and no other signs of spoilage are present, it's safe to eat!

Comments, Tips and Feedback:

- **A visitor writes on July 07, 2011:** "Thanks so much for the fantastic fig-strawberry jam recipe. I tried it exactly as given here and it is delicious, a

good consistency, and it looks beautiful. Also, thanks for the hint to let the cooked mixture sit for 5 minutes so the fruit didn't rise to the top, it worked! I chose to use the 2 1/4 cups of sugar just because sugar is a natural preservative, and the jam is just right. Oh, and, I used frozen strawberries. I had tried somebody else's fig-strawberry jello jam and it was way too sweet. Thanks for a great recipe with lots of good hints. I highly recommend it."

- **A visitor writes on June 23, 2011:** "I just wanted to thank you for your fig recipes and process pages. We have a good sized fig tree out our kitchen window and each year, since the first year of our marriage 12 years ago, I make fig and strawberry fig preserves for my husband. I have tried several recipes for regular fig jam and this one is by far, hands down, my new go to favorite recipes. Easy and Delicious with just right consistency. Also, I've always used the strawberry jello method for strawberry fig jam and usually do not eat it because it is too syrupy sweet for me. This year I made your recipe, I love your quote, there is no jello in preserves, and love, love it. My husband is on a mission trip and is returning tomorrow. I am so excited to share these jams with him. I should get extra bonus points. Thank you again. Oh, and I just made deck jam: That means I only used the figs I could reach from the deck or a chair. The tree is still 3/4 full and most are not even ripe yet. I see more canning in my future.

Summary - Typical Cost of Making Homemade Jam - makes 8 jars, 8 oz each**

Item	Quantity	Cost in 2006	Source	Subtotal
Berries (strawberries)	2 cups fresh	\$3.00/gallon	Pick your own	\$3.00
Canning jars (8 oz size), includes lids and rings	8 jars	\$7.00/dozen	Grocery stores, like Public, Kroger, Safeway and sometimes, Big Lots, local hardware stores and big box stores	\$8.00
Sugar	3 cups	\$2.00	Grocery stores, like Public, Kroger, Safeway and sometimes, Big Lots, local hardware stores and big box stores	\$2.00
Gelatin	2 boxes	\$1.50 per box	Grocery stores, like Public, Kroger, Safeway and sometimes, Big Lots, local hardware stores and big box stores	\$3.00
Total				\$16.00 total or about \$2.00 per jar

** - This assumes you already have the pots, pans, ladles, and reusable equipment. Note that you can reuse the jars and reduce the cost further; just buy new lids (the rings are reusable, but the flat lids are not)!

Can't find the equipment? We ship to all 50 states!

FAQs - Answers to Common Questions

- **Why should cooked jelly be made in small batches?**

If a larger quantity of juice is used, it will be necessary to boil it longer thus causing loss of flavor, darkening of jelly, and toughening of jelly. It really doesn't work.

Trust me; I've tried many times!

- **Can I use frozen berries instead of fresh?**

Yep! Raspberries can be particularly hard to find fresh and are expensive! Frozen berries work just fine, and measure the same. Just be sure to get the loose, frozen whole fruit; not those that have been mushed up or frozen in a sugar syrup!

- **Should jelly be boiled slowly or rapidly?**

It should be boiled rapidly since long, slow boiling destroys the pectin in the fruit juice.

- **What do I do if there's mold on my jellied fruit product?**

Discard jams and jellies with mold on them. The mold could be producing a mycotoxin (poisonous substance that can make you sick). USDA and microbiologists recommend against scooping out the mold and using the remaining jam or jelly.

- **Why did my jellied fruit product ferment, and what do I do?**

Jellied fruit products may ferment because of yeast growth. This can occur if the product is improperly processed and sealed, or if the sugar content is low. Fermented fruit products have a disagreeable taste. Discard them.

- **What happens if my jam or jelly doesn't gel?**

[Remaking cooked runny jam or jelly instructions can be found on this page](#)

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

