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How to Make Homemade Grape Jelly!

Making and canning your own grape jelly is also quite easy. Here's how to do it, in 12 easy steps and completely illustrated. These directions work equally well for other types of jelly: raspberry, blackberry, boysenberry, dewberry, gooseberry, loganberry, tayberry, marionberry, youngberry, etc.; by themselves or mixed berry jelly. Any variations will be spelled out in the directions inside the pectin.

Related pages: See this page for [How to make muscadine or scuppernong jelly](#) or [this page for Jam-making directions](#) and [this page for apple jelly](#) directions! For easy [applesauce](#) or [apple butter](#) directions, click on these links.

Ingredients and Equipment

- **Grapes** - 5 lbs of fresh grapes, preferably fresh, but if you want to start with grape juice (5 cups bottled, without sugar added or reconstituted from frozen, without sugar), you can skip to step 7.
- **Pectin** (it's a natural product, made from apples and available at grocery stores (season - spring through late summer) and in Wal-mart, grocery stores, etc. It usually goes for about \$2.00 to \$2.50 per box. [See here for more information about how to choose the type of pectin to use.](#)
- **Large spoons and ladles**
- **Jar funnel** (\$2 at WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores) or order it as part of the
- **At least 1 large pot**; I prefer 16 to 20 quart Teflon lined pots for easy cleanup.
- **Jelly strainer** - see step 6 - or a colander and cheesecloth.
- **1 Canner** (a huge pot to sterilize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at WalMart (seasonal item). Note: [we sell canners and supplies here, too - at excellent prices](#) - and it helps support this web site!
- **Ball jars** (Publix, WalMart carry them - 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

kit with the jar grabber.

- **Sugar** - About 7 cups of dry, granulated (table) sugar if you use regular pectin, 4 cups with either low or no-sugar pectin. For the [no-sugar recipe, click here](#)
- **Jar grabber** (to pick up the hot jars)- WalMart carries it *sometimes* - or order it here. It's a tremendously useful to put cars in the canner and take the hot jars out (without scalding yourself

lids to the jars. They may be reused many times.

Optional stuff:

- **Foley Food Mill** (\$25) - not necessary; useful to mush up the fruit or if you want to remove seeds (for example, from blackberries) or [make applesauce](#).
- **Lid lifter** (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sterilize them. (\$2 at WalMart or it comes in the kit at left)

Grape Jelly-making Directions

This example shows you how to make grape jelly. You can use this recipe to make almost any type of jelly from the fruit juice; where there is a difference, I will point it out! The yield from this recipe is about 12 eight-ounce jars (which is the same as 6 pints).

Step 1 - Pick the grapes! (or buy them already picked)

It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality ones! You can use Concord grapes, red grapes or other grapes. Whichever you choose, you want flavorful grapes. Plain seedless white/green grapes, for example, have little flavor and make a bland jelly. Most people choose Concord grapes or red grapes. Seedless or with seeds doesn't matter, as the strainer will remove them!



<http://www.PickYourOwn.org/grapejelly.htm>

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

Above are grapes 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](#).

Step 2 - How much fruit?

Grape Jelly can ONLY be made in rather small batches - about 6 cups at a time - like the directions on the pectin say, DO NOT increase the recipes or the grape jelly won't "set" (jell, thicken). As mentioned in the Ingredients section; you may use either 5 lbs of fresh grapes or 5 cups of grape juice (either bottled or reconstituted from frozen concentrate) without added sugar. Using grape juice is especially useful if you want to make some grape jelly in December to give away at Christmas!

Step 3 - 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.

NOTE: If unsterilized jars are used, the product should be processed for 5 more minutes. However, since this additional processing can result in a poor set (runny jelly), it's better to sterilize the jars.

Put the lids into a pan of boiling water 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 jelly.



Step 3 - Wash the grapes!

I'm sure you can figure out how to wash the grapes in a large bowl under running plain cold water.

Pick out any stems and leaves that became mixed in!

Step 4 - Crush or chop the grapes

You mash the grapes to release the juice. A potato masher is useful to help crush them. But if you really want to make it easy, just use your food processor or chopper. To make jelly, we'll need to crush them well so we can extract the juice. You'll need about 5 cups of juice.



Step 5 - Measure out the sugar



Check the directions with the pectin; typically, it is 7 cups of sugar to 5 cups of grape juice and one box of pectin (or 4 cups of sugar if using reduced sugar or no-sugar pectin). The precise measurements are found in each and every box of pectin sold. Mix the dry pectin with about 1/4 cup of the sugar and keep this separate from the rest of the sugar.

Step 6 - Heat the crushed grapes on the stove

We just want to bring the grapes to a boil to help release the juice and break down some of the fruit to help it pass through our jelly strainer. Put the crushed grapes in a big pot on the stove over medium to high heat (stir often enough to prevent burning) for until it starts to boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.



Step 7 - Sieve the cooked grapes



You can either put the soft cooked grapes through a jelly strainer (about \$9.00, see ordering at right) which results in the most clear jelly and is easiest to use, 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.

You may also want to run the crushed cooked grapes through a Foley food mill ([about \\$20 - see this page](#)) BEFORE the jelly strainer - it helps to extract more juice and jet out the large skins that will clog the strainer. It's not necessary, but helps you get the most out of the grapes.

If you need a stopping point and want to finish up the next day, this is a good place. Sometimes, jelly gets crystals, called tartrate crystals, forming in the jelly.

They're not harmful and don't affect the taste, but some people don't like the appearance. I rarely even see them! But if you do, let juice stand in a cool place overnight, then strain through two thicknesses of damp cheesecloth to remove any crystals that have formed.



Step 8 - Add the pectin to the hot strained juice and bring to a full boil

Stir the pectin into the grape 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).



Notes about pectin: I usually add about 20%



more pectin (just open another pack and add a little) or else the jelly 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: use the no-sugar or low sugar pectin. It cuts the amount of sugar you need from 7 cups per batch to 4 cups! (yes, you can add sugar to the no-sugar pectin - and it will taste better! On the other hand; I have never had success using NO added sugar with the No-sugar pectin . It always turned out runny and bland.) You might want to try using the low sugar recipe with a mixture of sugar and Splenda; that works, too.

Step 9 - Get the lids sterilizing

If you didn't do so already, put the lids into a pan of hot water (not boiling) 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



When the grape-pectin mix has reached a full boil, add the rest of the sugar (about 6 and 3/4 cups of sugar per 5 cup batch of grape juice; OR 4 cups of sugar if you are using the low or no-sugar pectin) and then bring it back to a boil and boil hard for 1 minute.

Step 11 - 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 jelly 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.



Step 12 - Fill the jars and put the lid and rings on



Fill them to within 1/4 inch of the top, wipe any spilled jelly 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 13 - 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 5 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 - and see the Table below for altitude differences. The directions on

the pectin tend to be pretty conservative. 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 jelly and then not to process the jars to be sure they don't spoil!

Table 1. Recommended process time for Grape Jelly 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 14 - 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.

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
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

