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See [www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm](http://www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm) for many other canning directions and recipes

## How to Make Homemade Blueberry Jelly - Easily!



Making and canning your own blueberry jelly is so easy. And this blueberry jelly is incredible. Even if you are a fan of strawberry, triple-berry, blackberry, or whatever, and don't like fresh blueberries, you **MUST** try this! Here's how to do it, in 12 simple steps and completely illustrated. Any variations will be spelled out in the directions inside the pectin.

For more information about blueberries, see [Blueberry Picking Tips](#)

For [other types \(strawberry, blackberry, peach, raspberry, etc.\) of jellies and jams](#) click here, and for easy [applesauce](#) or [apple butter](#) directions, click on these links. And here are [simple directions to make blueberry desserts: cobbler, coffee cakes / buckles and pie!](#)

## Ingredients and Equipment

- **Blueberries** - raw berries: 5 pints (which is: 10 cups, or 2.25 liters, about 3.5 lbs, almost 1.75 kg) preferably fresh, but frozen (without syrup works, too) . to yield 6 cups of washed, squashed berries. You can also use 6 cups of blueberry juice - frozen or canned; if you can find it!
- **Lemon juice** - 1/4 cup. It's optional, but it may help reduce spoilage, preserve color and retain flavor - either fresh squeezed or bottled.
- **Water** - 1/2 cup
- **Sugar** - See step 8. My favorite is the low sugar formula, using about 4.5 cups of dry, granulated (table) sugar. It is possible to make low-sugar, fruit juice-sweetened, or Stevia, my preference (or if you prefer, Splenda)-sweetened blueberry jelly; I'll point out the differences below.
- **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.). 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.



- **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.](#)
  - **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.
  - **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:
- **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)



## Blueberry Jelly-making Directions

This example shows you how to make blueberry jelly! The yield from this recipe is about 10 eight-ounce jars (which is the same as 5 pints).

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

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

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



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

At left are blueberries (in my yard, actually; they make a great hedge or landscaping bush) almost ripe! If you want to pick your own, here is a list and links to the [pick your own farms](#).

If you are starting out with blueberry juice (canned, fresh or frozen), just skip straight to step 8.

### Step 2 - How much fruit?

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 jelly won't "set" (jell, thicken). It takes about 10 cups of raw, unprepared blueberries per batch. For



triple berry jelly, I use 6 cups of mashed (slightly crushed) blueberries, 1 cup of raspberries and 1 cup of blackberries.

### 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; 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 jelly), 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 jelly.

Lids: put the lids into a pan of boiling water for at least several minutes; to soften up the gummed surface and clean the lids. I just leave them in there, with the heat on very low, until I need them!



#### **Step 4 - Wash the berries and sort!**

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

Then you need to pick out and remove any bits of stems, leaves and soft or mushy berries. It is easiest to do this in a large bowl of water and gently run your hands through the berries as they float. With your fingers slightly apart, you will easily feel any soft or mushy berries get caught in your fingers.

Then just drain off the water!



#### **Step 5 - Crush the berries**

You can go wild, be a conquering Genghis Khan crushing the peasants.. watch them flee. Well, if they're not fleeing, the berries sure do manage to roll everywhere. You won't find them until the next time you clean behind your refrigerator!



Anyway, to crush them, you can either do one layer at a time in a pan or bowl, using a potato masher..

OR you can be lazy like me and use the slice mode on your food processor or a blender. I believe you'll get higher yields this way, because the blender or food processor will reduce the particle size, releasing more juice. It also helps to release the blue color from the skins, giving the jelly a better blue color.

Either way, if you start with 10 pints of berries, you'll end up with about 6.5 cups of crushed blueberries.



### **Step 6 - Heat the crushed blueberries on the stove**

We just want to bring the blueberries 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 blueberries, with 1/2 cup of water, 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. If you are adding 1/4 cup lemon juice, do so now!

## Step 7 - Sieve the cooked blueberries

You can either put the soft cooked blueberries through a jelly strainer (about \$9.00, see ordering below) 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 blueberries 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 blueberries.



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 - Measure out the sweetener

Depending upon which type of jelly you're making (sugar, no-sugar, Stevia, my preference (or if you prefer, Splenda), mix of sugar and Stevia, my preference (or if you prefer, 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, Ball, Kerr, Mrs. Wages, etc. has directions inside). I don't recommend using Stevia, my preference (or if you prefer, Splenda) by itself - plain old sugar makes a big difference in the color and taste. Unless you're diabetic, for best results, try the low or lower sugar formula below.



Type of jam	Type of pectin to buy	Sweetener
regular	no-sugar or regular	7 cups of sugar
low sugar	no-sugar	4.5 cups of sugar
lower sugar	no-sugar	2 cups sugar and 2 cups Splenda (or about 1/3 that if you use Stevia, which is my preference)
no sugar	no-sugar	4 cups Splenda (or about 1/3 that if you use Stevia, which is my preference)
natural	no-sugar	3 cups fruit juice (grape, peach, apple or mixed)

**Step 9 - Mix the dry pectin with about 1/4 cup of sugar or other sweetener**

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.

**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.



**Step 10 - Add the pectin to the hot strained juice and bring to a full boil**

Stir the pectin into the blueberry 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 low sugar pectin. It cuts the amount of sugar you need from 7 cups per batch to 4 cups! And it tastes even

better! On the other hand; I have never had success 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 Stevia, my preference (or if you prefer, Splenda); that could work.



Is your jelly too runny? Pectin enables you to turn out perfectly set jelly every time. Made from natural apples, there are also natural no-sugar pectins that allow you to reduce the sugar you add by half or even eliminate sugar.!

### Step 11 - Add the remaining sugar and bring to a boil

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 blueberries) or other sweetener, and then bring it back to a boil and boil hard for 1 minute.



### 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 jelly is ready. If not, I mix in a little more pectin (about 1/s to 1/2 of another package) and bring it to a boil again for 1 minute.





**Step 13 - Fill the jars and put the lid and rings on**

Fill them to within  $\frac{1}{4}$ -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 and lid lifter come in really handy!



**Step 14 - 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 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. 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, 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

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process the jars to be sure they don't spoil!

### Step 15 - 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, 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!

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### 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 and keep the rims clean.