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## How to Make Homemade Canned Pepper Jelly Hot or sweet, using chilies, jalapeno, Bell, banana and pimiento peppers



It's not hard to make your own jalapeno pepper jelly (or jelly from other types of peppers), and can it so you can give it away or store it on the shelf for the winter! And unlike canned peppers, you can use an ordinary water bath canner. So, here's how to can pepper jelly! The directions are complete with instructions in easy steps and completely illustrated. In the winter when you open a jar, the pepper jelly will taste **MUCH** better than any store-bought jalapeno jelly.

Prepared this way, the jars have a shelf life of about 12 months, and aside from storing in a cool, dark place, require no special attention.

# Directions for Making Jalapeno Jelly

## Ingredients and Equipment

Yield: 5 jars (8 oz each)

- **3/4 lb to 1 pound of Peppers** (see step 1)
- 6 cups sugar (or other sweeteners - see step 6)
- **2 cups of 5% apple cider vinegar** (if you don't have any, use plain white 5% vinegar).
- **3 packets of dry pectin** (or 3 pouches of liquid pectin) [See this page for types of pectin and where to get it.](#)
- green food coloring (optional)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at Wal-Mart, hardware stores, etc.)
- Jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Ball jars (Publix, Wal-Mart carry them - about \$7 per dozen 8 oz jars including the lids and rings)
- **1 Water bath Canner** (a huge pot to sterilize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 - \$30 at mall kitchen stores, Wal-Mart. Note: we sell many sizes and types of canners for all types of stoves and needs - see [canning supplies](#)). Tomatoes are on the border between the high-acid fruits that can be preserved in a boiling-water bath and the low-acid fruits, vegetables and meats that need pressure canning
- At least 1 large pot
- Large spoons and ladles
- One 6 - 8 quart pot or saucepan

## Recipe and Directions

### Step 1 - Selecting the peppers

The most important step! You need peppers that are FRESH and crisp. Limp, old peppers will make nasty tasting jalapeno jelly. Guests will probably throw them at you. Select filled but tender, firm, crisp peppers. Remove and discard any soft, diseased, spotted and rusty pods. Select small peppers, preferably 1 inch to 1 and 1/4 inch in diameter. Larger peppers are often too fibrous and tough.

You can use jalapeno, chili or any peppers you like!

**Hot pepper caution:** Wear plastic or rubber gloves and do not touch your face while handling or cutting hot peppers. If you do not wear gloves, wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching your face or eyes. Hot peppers can burn your eyes and skin - ever heard of pepper spray?

### How many peppers and where to get them

You can grow your own, pick your own, or buy them at the grocery store. An average of 1 pound is needed per batch of 5 jars (8 oz each). For reference, a bushel of peppers weighs 25 pounds.



## Step 2 - Prepare the jars and pressure canner

### Wash the jars and lids



This is a good time to get the jars ready! The dishwasher is fine for the jars; especially if it has a "sterilize" cycle - put the lids into a pan of boiling water for at least several minutes. I just put the lids in a small pot of almost boiling water for 5 minutes, and use the magnetic "lid lifter wand" (available from WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores) to pull them out.

### Get the water bath canner heating up

Rinse out your canner, fill it with hot tap water and put it on the stove on low heat (for now) so it will be ready (but not boiled away) by the time you are ready for it later.



### Step 3 - Wash the peppers!

I'm sure you can figure out how to rinse the peppers in plain cold or lukewarm water.



### Step 4 - Remove stems and seeds

Cut off the stems (left) and scrape out the seeds.

## Step 5 - Puree the peppers in a blender



Pop the peppers into a blender or food processor and puree them. You may need to add some of the vinegar in order to get the blender to work properly with them!

## Step 6 - 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 each and every box of pectin sold.



Type of jam	Type of pectin to buy	Sweetener
regular	regular	6 cups of sugar
low sugar	low-sugar or no-sugar	4 cups of sugar
lower sugar	low-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)

For more about the [types of pectin sold, see this page!](#)

Notes:

Nutrasweet (aspartame) will NOT work - it breaks down during heating).

Splenda (sucralose) substitutes exactly with sugar BUT even the manufacturers of Splenda will tell you that you get best results if you just use a 50-50 mix; half regular sugar and half Splenda.

Sugar not only affects the sweetness, but also the color and flavor. It does not affect the preserving or spoilage properties - that has to do with acid and the processing method.

you can use "no sugar" pectin in place of "low sugar" pectin - you can still add sugar or other sweeteners.



### **Step 7 - Mix the pectin and some sugar / sweetener**

Mix the 2.5 (two and a half) packets of dry pectin with about 1/2 cup of sugar or other sweetener and set aside.

### **Step 8 - Cook the peppers, vinegar and sugar / sweetener**

Combine the pepper puree, the rest of the 1 cup of apple cider vinegar and the remaining sweetener in a pot and heat to a boil over medium heat, while stirring periodically, to prevent burning. Boil for 10 minutes, continuing to stir as needed to prevent burning.

### **Step 8 - Add the pectin and boil hard for one minute**

After boiling for 10 minutes, add the pectin, return the mix to a boil and then boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly.



### **Step 10 - 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 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 jam is ready. If not, I mix in a little more pectin (about 1/3 to 1/2 of another package) and bring it to a boil again for 1 minute. Get a few jars out of the dishwasher (still hot) and get your funnel, lid lifter and ladle ready. I put an old towel down - it makes clean up easier.



## 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 jam off the top, seat the lid and tighten the ring around them.

Put the lids on each jar and seal them by putting a ring on and screwing it down snugly (but not with all your might, just "snug").

This is where the jar tongs and lid lifter 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 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 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 10 minutes. I usually hedge my bets and start pulling them out after 10 minutes, and the last jars were probably in for 12. 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, 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!

## Step 14 - 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 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 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, the 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.

The contents should "set" or gel within 24hours. If they don't, which does happen from time to time due to variations in ingredients, you can remake it - [see this page for how to fix runny jam and jelly](#):

[http://www.pickyourown.org/how\\_to\\_fix\\_runny\\_jam.htm](http://www.pickyourown.org/how_to_fix_runny_jam.htm)

I find they last about 18 months. After that, the get darker in color and start to get runny. They still seem safe to eat, but the flavor is bland. So eat them in the first 12 to 18 months after you prepare them!