



## PRESERVING BERRY SYRUPS AT HOME

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# Preserving Berry Syrups at Home

## Abstract

Home-prepared berry syrups are made by extracting juice from fresh or frozen berries and combining the juice with sugar. About 6–7 cups of fresh or frozen fruit will produce enough juice to fill about 9 half-pint jars with berry syrup, yielding 4 ½ to 5 cups. When making berry syrups at home, the product can either be canned or frozen. When canning berry syrups, leave ½ inch headspace in jars and process in a boiling water bath canner. If freezing berry syrups, leave 1 inch of headspace in jars to allow for expansion during freezing.

## Preserving Berry Syrups at Home

### General Information

Syrups and sauces made from berries are great toppings for pancakes, ice cream, and pastries, and make delicious additions to milk shakes and smoothies. Making and preserving berry syrups is one way to use an abundance of



Preparing home-canned berry syrup.

fresh berries, and be able to enjoy the fresh berry flavor year-round. Berry syrups can easily be made and preserved at home.

To make syrup, juice is extracted from fresh or frozen berries and combined with sugar for sweetness. Home-prepared syrups can either be canned or frozen for long-term storage.

### Selection and Preparation

To make syrup, you need 6–7 cups of fresh or frozen fruit. A combination of fruits can be used. This amount of fruit will yield about 4 ½ to 5 cups of juice, which will fill about 9 half-pint jars for processing. To prepare fresh berries, follow these steps:

1. Wash.
2. Remove caps and stems, if necessary.
3. Crush the fruit, using either a potato masher, food mill, or food processor.



Fresh berries waiting to be mashed for syrup.



Berry syrups can also be made from frozen berries.



## Extracting Juice

To extract juice from berries, use the *drip method* as follows:

1. After crushing the berries, place the crushed fruit in a saucepan.
2. Heat the fruit to boiling and simmer for about 5 – 10 minutes, or until the fruit is soft.
3. Strain the hot pulp through a colander.
4. When it's cool enough to handle, strain the juice through a double layer of cheese cloth or jelly bag; do not squeeze the bag.
5. Discard the dry pulp and measure the strained juice.



Straining fruit pulp through a jelly bag is one way to extract the juice for syrup.

## Preparing Jars, Lids, and Rings for Canning

When canning, use standard, mason-type jars with self-sealing lids and metal rings. Before using, the jars, lids, and rings need to be cleaned and sterilized, depending on the processing time.

1. To clean, use hot soapy water and rinse well. Jars, lids, and rings can also be cleaned in a dishwasher.
2. If the processing time for canned products is less than ten minutes, jars need to be sterilized.
3. To sterilize, place water-filled jars right side up in the boiling water bath canner.
4. Cover jars with water to 1 inch above jars.
5. Heat to boiling and boil jars for ten minutes.
6. For elevations above 1,000 feet, boil an extra minute for each 1,000 feet higher.
7. Check the directions on your box of lids to determine if lids need to be heated to simmer before placing on jars for processing.

## Making Syrup

To make the syrup, follow these steps:

1. Combine 5 cups of strained juice and 7 cups of sugar in a large saucepan.
2. Bring to a boil and simmer for 3 minutes.
3. Remove from heat.
4. Skim off the foam. Foam is a by-product of boiling fruit and fruit juices, and forms at the top of the juice. If foam is canned with the syrup, it can shorten the shelf life of the syrup. Therefore, when the syrup is removed from the heat, the foam needs to be skimmed off. To skim off the foam, place a clean spoon under the foam and lift out of the saucepan. Repeat until all the foam has been skimmed off the syrup.

Syrups can also be made with whole pieces of fruit. To do so, replace 1–2 cups of juice with 1–2 cups of fresh or frozen fruit, and follow these directions:

1. Combine juice and fruit with 7 cups of sugar in a large saucepan.
2. Bring to a boil and simmer for 3 minutes.
3. Remove from heat.
4. Skim off the foam.

## Canning Homemade Syrup

To store syrup at room temperature, it must be canned. Follow these steps for canning the syrup you just made:

1. Using a funnel and ladle, fill 9 clean, half-pint jars with syrup, leaving ½ inch headspace. (Headspace is the distance between the bottom of the lid and the product in the jar.)

2. Thoroughly wipe jar rim and threads with a clean, damp paper towel.
3. Cover with lid and band, and tighten band to “fingertip tight.”
4. Load jars into the canner using a jar lifter, making sure to keep the jars upright at all times.
5. If the water does not cover the jars by 1 to 2 inches, add more boiling water to the canner.
6. Turn heat to the highest setting, cover the canner with the lid, and heat until the water boils vigorously.
7. Once the water reaches a full rolling boil, start your timer for the recommended number of minutes from Table 1, making sure to adjust for altitude. Make sure the water in the canner remains boiling throughout the entire processing time.
8. When timer goes off, turn off the heat, remove the canner lid and allow jars to sit for 5 minutes.
9. After 5 minutes, remove jars with a jar lifter, keeping the jars upright at all times. Place jars on a drying rack and allow to cool for 12-24 hours.
10. When cool, check for seals. To check jars for seal, listen for the “popping” sound during cooling. Lids are sealed if they are curved downward in the center and do not move when pressed on. Another way to test for seal is by tapping the center of the lid with a spoon. Sealed lids produce a clear, ringing sound.
11. If jars sealed, remove ring bands from sealed jars to prevent rusting, clean jars and lids, label, and store in a cool, dry place out of direct light.
12. What if jars don’t seal? You have three choices:
  - Put in the refrigerator and use immediately.
  - Put in the freezer.
  - Re-process within 24 hours. Remove the lid and check the jar sealing surface for tiny nicks. If necessary, change the jar, add a new treated lid, and reprocess using the original processing time.
    - If jar(s) unseal after 24 hours, product must be thrown away.

## Storing Syrups

In order to store syrups at room temperature, they must be processed in a boiling-water canner. Label and date sealed jars, and store in a cool, dry, dark place. Properly canned syrup stored in a cool, dry place will retain a high quality for at least one year. Storing canned goods near a heat source like hot pipes, a stove, a furnace, or in sunlight can decrease the quality of the product. Once opened, canned syrups should be stored in the refrigerator, and will maintain high quality if used within one month.

Syrups may be frozen instead of canned. If freezing, leave 1-inch headspace to allow for expansion during freezing. Frozen syrup will maintain high quality if used within one year of freezing. Syrups stored in the freezer should be kept in the refrigerator once opened.

## Further Reading

OSU Extension. 2008. [Food Safety & Preservation: Making Berry Syrups at Home](#). *Oregon State University Extension Publication SP 50-632*. Oregon State University.

Powers-Hammond, L. and S. McCurdy. 2015. *Fundamentals of Consumer Food Safety and Preservation: Master Handbook*. Washington State University.

UGA Extension. 2009. [Selecting, Preparing and Canning Fruit](#). United States Department of Agriculture Publications, *National Center for Home Food Preservation*. University of Georgia.

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Table 1. Recommended Process Time for Berry Syrup in a Boiling-Water Canner

		Process Times at Altitudes of:		
Style of Pack	Jar Size	0-1,000 ft.	1,000-6,000 ft.	Above 6,000 ft.
Hot	Half-pints or Pints	10 minutes	15 minutes	20 minutes



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