



Fruit Leathers

Fruit leathers are homemade fruit rolls. They are a tasty chewy, dried fruit product. Fruit leathers are made by pouring pureéd fruit onto a flat surface for drying. When dried, the fruit is pulled from the surface and rolled. It gets the name "leather" from the fact that when pureéd fruit is dried, it is shiny and has the texture of leather.



The advantages of making your own fruit leathers are to save money use less sugar and to mix fruit flavors. Leftover fruit pulp from making jelly can be blended and made into fruit rolls.

For the diabetic adult or child, fruit leathers made without sugar are a healthy choice for snacks or desserts. Individual fruit leathers should contain the amount of fruit allowed for the fruit exchange.

Directions follow for making fruit leathers. Fresh, frozen or drained canned fruit can be used.

Fresh Fruit Leathers:

- Select ripe or slightly overripe fruit.
- Wash fresh fruit or berries in cool water. Remove peel and seeds as desired; remove stems.
- Cut fruit into chunks. Use 2 cups of fruit to make a 13" x 15" inch fruit leather. Pureé fruit until smooth.
- Add 2 teaspoons of lemon juice or 1/8 teaspoon ascorbic acid (375 mg) for each 2 cups light colored fruit such as apples, apricots and peaches to prevent darkening.
- Optional: To sweeten, add corn syrup, honey or sugar. Corn syrup or honey is best for longer storage because it prevents crystals. Sugar is fine for immediate use or short storage. Use ¼ to ½ cup sugar, corn syrup or honey for each 2 cups of fruit. Saccharin-based sweeteners could also be used to reduce tartness without adding calories. Aspartame sweeteners may lose sweetness during drying.

Leathers from Canned or Frozen Fruit:

- Home preserved or store-bought canned or frozen fruit can be used.
- Drain fruit, save liquid.
 - Use 2 cups (1 pint) of fruit for each 13" X 15" leather.
 - Purée fruit until smooth. If thick, add liquid.
- Add 2 teaspoons of lemon juice or 1/8 teaspoon ascorbic acid (375 mg) for each 2 cups of light colored fruit to prevent darkening. Applesauce can be dried alone or added to any fresh fruit purée as an extender. It decreases tartness and makes the leather smoother and more pliable.
- Making tomato leather from a tomato sauce product is preferable to using pureéd made from fresh tomatoes as the water has been reduced and the product can be rehydrated into tomato sauce.

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Preparing the Trays: For drying in the oven a 13" X 15" cookie pan with edges works well. Line pan with plastic wrap being careful to smooth out wrinkles. Do not use waxed paper or aluminum foil.

To dry in a dehydrator, specially designed sheets can be purchased or plastic trays can be lined with plastic wrap. Plastic sheets may be lightly sprayed with cooking spray to prevent the fruit leather from sticking.

Pouring the Leather: Fruit leathers can be poured into a single large sheet (13" X 15") or into several smaller sizes. Spread puree evenly, about 1/8-inch thick, onto drying tray. Avoid pouring puree too close to the edge of the cookie sheet. The larger fruit leathers take longer to dry. Approximate drying times are 6 to 8 hours in a dehydrator, up to 18 hours in an oven and 1 to 2 days in the sun.

Drying the Leather: Dry fruit leathers at 140°F. Leather dries from the outside edge toward the center. Test for dryness by touching center of leather; no indentation should be evident. While warm, peel from plastic and roll, allow to cool and rewrap the roll in plastic. Cookie cutters can be used to cut out shapes that children will enjoy. Roll, and wrap in plastic.

Chances are the fruit leather will not last long enough for storage. If it does, it will keep up to 1 month at room temperature. For storage up to 1 year, place tightly wrapped rolls in the freezer.

Spices, Flavors and Garnishes: To add interest to your fruit leathers, spices, flavorings or garnishes can be added.

- **Spices to Try** — Allspice, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, ginger, mace, mint, nutmeg or pumpkin pie spice. Use sparingly, start with 1/8 teaspoon for each 2 cups of puree.
- **Flavorings to Try** — Almond extract, lemon juice, lemon peel, lime juice, lime peel, orange extract, orange juice, orange peel or vanilla extract. Use sparingly, try 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon for each 2 cups of puree.
- **Delicious Additions to Try** — Shredded coconut, chopped dates, other dried chopped fruits, granola, miniature marshmallows, chopped nuts, chopped raisins, poppy seeds, sesame seeds or sunflower seeds.
- **Fillings to Try** — Melted chocolate, softened cream cheese, cheese spreads, jam, preserves, marmalade, marshmallow cream or peanut butter. Spread one or more of these on the leather after it is dried and then roll. Store in refrigerator.

This information was adapted from *"This document was adapted from "So Easy to Preserve", 6th ed. 2014. Bulletin 989, pages 252-253. Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia, Athens. Revised by Elizabeth L. Andress, Ph.D. and Judy A. Harrison, Ph.D., Extension Foods Specialists.*

To learn more about other home preserved foods, contact the UCCE Master Food Preserver Program of Solano and Yolo Counties, *Advice to Preserve by... Ask Us!*

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