

TIPS FOR REDUCING SUGAR IN FOOD PRESERVATION

Sugar is an important ingredient in many food preservation recipes. But for a number of reasons, some people would like to use less than the required amount. Reducing the sugar content can lead to safety and quality changes.

Jams and Jellies

In jams and jellies, the sugar added promotes gel formation and serves as a preservative. If the sugar is decreased in recipes that rely on pectin for thickening, the product will have the consistency of syrup rather than jelly. The correct proportions of fruit, pectin and sugar are essential for gelling.

There are special recipes on the market for low sugar jelled products. These products use gelatin or pectin substitutes in place of pectin. These products can be found in the canning supply section of most supermarkets.

The keeping quality is changed when sugar is decreased in jams and jellies. Products made with gelatin or vegetable gums must be kept refrigerated or frozen to prevent mold growth.

Pickles and Relishes

Sugar in pickling is used to balance the tartness of the vinegar. Although the sugar can be eliminated from pickle recipes, the pickles are likely to be too sour. Note: Under no circumstances should the amount of vinegar be decreased or diluted to compensate for less sugar. Vinegar provides a certain level of acidity that is essential for safe pickling.

Canned and Frozen Fruits

In frozen and canned fruits, sugar contributes to the flavor and aids in holding the shape of the fruit. If desired, the amount of sugar can be reduced or eliminated, without changing the keeping quality of the product. Because the texture of frozen and canned fruits may change when preserved with reduced or no sugar, it is no savings if your family will not eat the food preserved because you were trying to save a little on sugar.

Natural Juices

Natural fruit juices such as apple can be used in place of sugared syrups for canning and freezing fruits. Try a variety and see what you like. Good combinations are peaches canned and frozen in orange juice; pears and apples canned in apple juice or pineapple juice; and berries frozen in cranberry juice.

Other Sweeteners

Honey

Some people substitute honey in place of sugar in food preservation recipes. This does not reduce the sugar content of preserved foods. Two types of sugar—fructose and glucose—are the major components of honey. Honey can be substituted for sugar in canned and frozen fruits. The flavor of honey is sweeter than that of granulated sugar, so it is advisable to use less honey than the amount of sugar specified in the recipe.

In jelly recipes without added pectin, honey can replace up to one-half of the granulated sugar. With added pectin, two cups of honey can replace two cups of sugar in most recipes. In recipes that yield small batches of five to six glasses, one cup of the sugar can be replaced by honey.

Be sure to use, light, mild-flavored honey if you don't want noticeable flavor changes in your preserved product.

Corn Syrup

Corn syrup can replace up to half the amount of sugar in making syrups for preserved fruits. Be sure to use light corn syrup. Dark corn syrup, sorghum and molasses should not be used because their flavor overpowers the fruit flavor and may darken the fruit.