

Jams and Jellies
By Ora Emmerich
UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers
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Have a lot of fruit and do not know what to do with it? Can it! The Master Food Preservers free public education class, Jams and Jellies, offers great recipes, tested techniques and the safest methods of home food preservation for many types of fruits. Presented on July 16th and again on July 19th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., the class teaches through demonstration and discussion.

Jam differs from jelly in that jams contain whole fruit that has been chopped or crushed, while jellies result from the fruit juices of cooked fruit and sugar. Cooking the fruit with sugar results in a product with a spreadable consistency. Sometimes, pectin and acid must be added to insure gelling and proper pH for canning.

Pectin occurs naturally in fruit and causes gelling. Not all fruits contain the same amount of naturally occurring pectin, so readily available, commercial pectins, fill the gap when needed. These commercial products may contain additional ingredients, but most derive the gelling quality from pectin found in apples. When using commercial pectin be sure to follow the manufacturer's recipes exactly. These recipes have been tested and approved for home canning and any variation may compromise the results. Never double a recipe when using commercial pectin as the cooking and processing times have been calculated using a single recipe and the product will not turn out as desired, nor will safety be assured.

Because of the high acid level of jam and jelly recipes, these products require only water bath canning, which uses easily available tools and simple techniques. The temperature in the boiling water is high enough to kill any food-borne bacteria and viruses when the recipe is followed. The equipment required includes a large kettle with a tight fitting lid, a metal or wooden rack to hold the jars off the bottom of the kettle, and glass canning jars with lids and rings, and may be found in most general goods stores. Additional accessories such as jar lifters, funnels, ladles, spoons, spatulas, thermometers and so on usually make the job easier and can be found in the canning section of the store. These items may be reused many times, with the exception of the jar lids, which are used only once.

The Master Food Preserver class leader and crew demonstrate how to use all of the water bath canning equipment at the free public education classes. The entire process, from preparing and cooking the fruit to actually canning the product in a water bath canner, clearly shows even novice food preservers the most up-to-date practices in safe home food preservation.

Questions about safe home food preservation? Call the Master Food Preservers and leave a message at (530) 621-5506. A Master Food Preserver will return the call. The Master Food Preservers are also available free of charge to speak to organizations and clubs about food safety or food preservation topics. Just call the number above to arrange for a speaker for small or large groups. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/.