

Low Sugar Canning
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Most novice home food preservationists react with surprise to the amount of sugar usually called for in a recipe for jams or jellies. Sugar helps to keep the color, shape and texture of fruit and acts to help preserve fruit spreads. Most recipes call for sugar because of the improved taste imparted by the sweetener, but some recipes can be found for low or no sugar preserving. Because sugar may act as an aid to preserving, never arbitrarily reduce the amount of sugar called for in a recipe. Better to use a recipe designed for less sugar than to risk contamination of preserved products. Always use recipes from approved sources, such as the government, canning products manufacturers or land-grant universities.

Also, just because a sugar substitute can be used in place of sugar for coffee or tea, do not assume that it can replace sugar in a preserving recipe calling for sugar. It will not work. It will taste awful. Find a recipe calling for the sugar substitute and follow it precisely for best results.

Preserving fruit requires no sugar, though most people agree that the fruit tastes better when canned with some type of sugar syrup. Preserving jams and jellies proves a bit trickier. Gelling proceeds better with the addition of sugar and this helps preserve the jam or jelly.

The Master Food Preservers demonstrate how to can with low or no sugar at the free public education class on August 20th at the UC Cooperative Extension office in Placerville. To get started at home, try this recipe for delicious conserves. Mmmm.....fabulous over ice-cream or plain cake.

APPLE-CINNAMON CONSERVE

4 cups unsweetened applesauce
1 20 oz. can unsweetened, crushed pineapple (drained)
1 cup chopped dried apples
¾ cup raisins
½ tsp. cinnamon
2 Tbsp. bottled lemon juice

Combine ingredients in large saucepot. Simmer until thick, about 30 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent sticking. Ladle hot conserve into hot jars, leaving ¼" headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe the rims clean. Place lids and rings on jars, tightening rings finger tight. Process for 10 minutes in a boiling water canner.
Yield: 6 half-pints Source: Ball Blue Book

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/.