



UCCE Master Food Preserver Program of Sacramento County

4145 Branch Center Road, Sacramento, CA 95827-3823

Office: (916) 875-6913

Email: sacmfp@ucanr.edu

Website: ucanr.edu/mfpsac

Using Fresh Grape Leaves

<https://whatscookingamerica.net> (2017)

Fresh grape leaves are best picked from grape vines in the late Spring and early Summer (May and June), while they are still tender and unsprayed. Also try to pick the grape leaves early in the day. **During this time period, no grapes are visible on the grape vines.**

Be sure and pick the grape leaves before the first spray as some sprays are toxic. Most of the sprays used today are non-toxic and water soluble, but sulfur taste is not what you want on your grapes.

Select young whole, medium-size leaves (4- to 5-inches wide) with a good light green color and no holes (too small grape leaves will tear when using and too large grape leaves are tough and chewy). The leaves should also be shiny, smooth leaves. Avoid fuzzy thick leaves.

The best leaves are those below the new growth at the top of the grape plant. The grape leaves thicken and toughen as the sun ages them.

- **Rule of thumb – count down three (3) leaves from the new growth at the end of the vine, and pick the next 2 to 3 leaves, then move on to the next stem.**
- **Pick approximately 1 1/2 pounds of fresh leaves. 1 to 1 1/2 pounds of small fresh leaves = approximately 100 to 120 leaves.**

Thoroughly rinse the grape leaves in cold water and then drain.

Using a sharp knife or scissors, cut off the stems.

Blanch the Grape Leaves: Fresh grape leaves should be blanched before using. Either soak in very hot water for 15 minutes to soften the leaves or blanch grape leaves in a brine until they are soft (the time will depend on the leaves – fresh ones will only take a minute).

Brine Recipe:

4 cups water

1 cup salt

Bring water to a boil. Add grape leaves, approximately 12 leaves at a time. Bring water just back to a boil; remove grape leaves immediately and plunge the leaves into ice water. Drain and dry the leaves with paper towels. **NOTE: By doing this step it helps to set the color in the leaves.**

Store leaves between layers of paper towels in air-tight re-sealable plastic bags and freeze until ready to use.

To Use: Use as soon as you thaw them as they do not keep too well after freezing. Frozen grape leaves only last about 6 months in the freezer.

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Recipes using fresh or bottled grape leaves:

[Dolmades \(Stuffed Grape Leaves\),](https://whatscookingamerica.net/Vegetables/StuffedGrapeLeaves.htm)

<https://whatscookingamerica.net/Vegetables/StuffedGrapeLeaves.htm>

Often served as part of a meze (appetizer) plate. Too often they come from a can and are not fresh. Homemade are far superior to the canned. If you have never tried fresh dolmades, now is the time. They are very easy to make and so delicious!

[Egyptian Stuffed Grape Leaves Recipe](https://whatscookingamerica.net/Vegetables/Egyptian-StuffedGrapeLeaves.htm)

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This is a traditional Egyptian Stuffed Grape Leaves recipe shared with What's Cooking America by Chef Maha Barsoom. Maha is a personal chef and caterer specializing in Egyptian cooking. Maha travels all over North America and Europe teaching about Egyptian cooking and cuisine.

[Stuffed Grape Leaves with Gorgonzola and Olives](https://whatscookingamerica.net/Appetizers/GrapeLeavesGorgonzola.htm)

<https://whatscookingamerica.net/Appetizers/GrapeLeavesGorgonzola.htm>

These wonderful appetizers are great to serve with wine and cheese!



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Research on food preparation is ongoing—recommendations may change. Make sure your food preservation information is always current. Always follow up-to-date, tested guidelines and recipes from reliable sources. Visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation – your source for current research-based recommendations for most methods of home food preservation. <http://nchfp.uga.edu/>