



Using, Storing and Preserving



Strawberries

Prepared by:
Lisa Treiber, MSU Extension Educator

Michigan Fresh: Using, Storing and Preserving Strawberries was first published in March 2015 and revised in July 2023. The original replaced *WO1045 Food Preservation Series – Strawberries* (MSU Extension, 2006).

Michigan-grown strawberries are available between June and July.



Food Safety and Storage

- Avoid purchasing fruits that are bruised, damaged or moldy.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Wash strawberries thoroughly under running water. Do not use soap.
- Keep strawberries away from raw meats and meat juice to prevent cross-contamination.
- Use soft, overripe berries immediately; discard any smashed or moldy product.
- Store berries in a box with holes and cover with plastic wrap, or put in a plastic bag with holes.
- Store at 40 °F.
- Use within 1 to 2 days, washing and hulling them as you use them.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve only what your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

1 quart (1½ pounds)	=	4 cups
8-quart crate (12 pounds)	=	12 pints frozen
24-quart crate	=	18 to 24 quarts canned
36 pounds fresh	=	36 pints frozen
¾ quart fresh	=	1 pint frozen

How to Preserve

Freezing

Choose firm, ripe, red berries, preferably with a slightly tart flavor. Large berries are better sliced or crushed. Sort the berries. Wash them in cold water but do not soak. Cap and drain well. Using the sugar and syrup pack methods will produce better quality frozen strawberries than packing berries without sweetening.

- **Whole berries syrup pack method:** Put berries into containers and cover with cold syrup, mixed according to preference in the “Syrups for Use in Freezing Fruits” table that follows. Leave ½- to 1½-inch headspace depending on container type. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Syrups for Use in Freezing Fruits

Type of syrup	Percent syrup*	Cups of sugar**	Cups of water	Yield of syrup (cups)
Very light	10	½	4	4½ cups
Light	20	1	4	4¾ cups
Medium	30	1¾	4	5 cups
Heavy	40	2¾	4	5½ cups
Very heavy	50	4	4	6 cups

*Approximate

**In general, up to one-fourth of the sugar may be replaced by corn syrup or mild-flavored honey. A larger proportion of corn syrup may be used if a very bland, light-colored type is selected.

- **Whole berries sugar pack method:** Add 1 part sugar to 6 parts strawberries, and mix thoroughly. Stir until most of the sugar is dissolved or allow to stand for 15 minutes. Leave ½- to 1½-inch headspace depending on container type. Seal, label, date and freeze.
- **Sliced or crushed method:** Prepare for packing as you would for whole berries sugar pack method; slice or crush partially or completely. For each quart of berries add ¾ cup sugar; mix completely. Stir until most of sugar is dissolved, or allow to stand for 15 minutes. Leave ½- to 1½-inch headspace depending on container type.

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- **Unsweetened pack method:** Pack into containers, leaving ½-inch headspace. To ensure better color, cover with water containing 1 teaspoon ascorbic acid in each quart of water. Seal, label, date and freeze.
- **Pectin pack method:** This alternative uses pectin and less sugar than the syrup pack method and retains the fresh berry flavor, color and texture. Follow the manufacturer's directions on the box. Pack into freezer bags or containers, leaving ½ – 1½-inch headspace depending on container type. Seal, label, date and freeze. Freeze no more than 1 quart of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. One cubic foot will hold 30 quarts.

Recommended process time (in minutes) for strawberry syrup in a boiling-water canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time at altitudes of		
		0 – 1,000 ft	1,001 – 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Hot	Half-pints or pints	10	15	20

“Strawberry Syrup” recipe is adapted from the recipe “Berry Syrup” from the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP) *Selecting, Preparing and Canning Fruit*, reviewed February 2018 (https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_02/berry_syrup.html). The NCHFP adapted it from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (Agriculture Information Bulletin, No. 539). USDA, 2015.

Canning

Strawberry Syrup

Yield: 9 half-pints

- 6½ cups of fresh or frozen berries
- 6¾ cups of sugar

You may also use this procedure with fresh juices from fresh or frozen strawberries, and with fresh or frozen blueberries, cherries, grapes or raspberries.

Select fresh or frozen fruit. Wash, cap and stem fresh fruit and crush in a saucepan. Heat to boiling and simmer until soft, 5 to 10 minutes. Strain hot berries through a colander, and drain until cool enough to handle. Strain the collected juice through a double layer of cheesecloth or a jelly bag. Discard the dry pulp. The yield of the pressed juice should be about 4½ to 5 cups. In a large saucepan, combine the juice with sugar. Bring to a boil, and simmer 1 minute. To make syrup with whole fruit pieces, save 1 or 2 cups of the fresh or frozen fruit, combine these with the sugar, and simmer as in making regular syrup. Remove from heat, skim off foam, and fill clean, hot, half-pint or pint jars, leaving ½-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims, adjust lids and process (see table that follows for recommended processing times).

Strawberry Jam with powdered pectin

Yield: About 9 or 10 half-pint jars

- 5½ cups crushed strawberries (about 3 quarts of strawberries)
- 1 package powdered pectin (only use powdered pectin)
- 8 cups sugar

Sterilize canning jars and prepare two-piece canning lids according to manufacturer's directions.

To prepare fruit. Sort and wash fully ripe strawberries; remove stems and caps. Crush berries.

To make jam. Measure crushed strawberries into a kettle. Add pectin and stir well. Place on high heat and, stirring constantly, bring quickly to a full boil with bubbles over the entire surface. Add sugar, continue stirring, and heat again to a full bubbling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat; skim.

Fill hot jam immediately into hot, sterile jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel; adjust two-piece metal canning lids. Process in a boiling-water canner (see table that follows for recommended processing times).

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		0 – 1,000 ft	1,001 – 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Hot	Half-pints or pints	5	10	15

“Strawberry Jam With Powdered Pectin” recipe is adapted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation recipe of the same name at https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_07/strawberry_jam_powder.html. That recipe was adapted from “How to Make Jellies, Jams and Preserves at Home.” Home and Garden Bulletin No. 56. Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture. 1982 reprint. National Center for Home Food Preservation, June 2005.



Uncooked Strawberry Jam with powdered pectin

Yield: About 5 or 6 half-pint jars

- 2 cups crushed strawberries (about 1 quart berries)
- 4 cups sugar
- 1 package powdered pectin (only use powdered pectin)
- 1 cup water

Sterilize canning jars and prepare two-piece canning lids according to manufacturer’s directions.

To prepare fruit. Sort and wash fully ripe berries. Drain. Remove caps and stem; crush berries.

To make jam. Place prepared berries in a large mixing bowl. Add sugar, mix well, and let stand for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Dissolve pectin in water and boil for 1 minute. Add pectin solution to berry-and-sugar mixture; stir for 2 minutes.

Pour jam into freezer containers or canning jars, leaving ½-inch headspace at the top. Close covers on containers and let stand at room temperature for 24 hours.

To store. Store uncooked jams in refrigerator or freezer. You can store jam up to 3 weeks in the refrigerator or up to a year in a freezer. Once a container is opened, store jam in the refrigerator and use within a few days. If kept at room temperature, jam will mold or ferment in a short time.

“Uncooked Strawberry Jam With Powdered Pectin” recipe is adapted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation recipe “Uncooked Berry Jam With Powdered Pectin” at https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_07/uncooked_berry_jam_powder.html. That recipe was adapted from “How to Make Jellies, Jams and Preserves at Home.” Home and Garden Bulletin No. 56. Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture. 1982 reprint. National Center for Home Food Preservation, June 2005.

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