



Using, Storing and Preserving



Strawberries

Prepared by:

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Michigan-grown strawberries are available between June and July.



Recommended varieties

Guardian, Surecrop, Midway, Red Chief, Sparkle, Gilbert and Ozark Beauty are excellent for freezing, while Red Chief and Guardian are recommended varieties for preserves. Raritan, Delite, Holiday, Earliglow and Scarlet varieties are additional varieties that grow well in Michigan.

Storage and food safety

- Avoid purchasing fruits that are bruised, damaged or moldy.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Keep fruit 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.
- Wash fruits thoroughly under running water. Do not use soap.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve only what your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

1 quart (1 1/2 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
2/3 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.

- **Syrup pack method:** Pack berries into containers and cover with cold 50 percent syrup (1 part water to 1 part sugar), leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze the berries.
- **Sugar pack method:** Add 1 part sugar to 6 parts strawberries, and mix thoroughly. Put into containers, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze the berries.
- **Unsweetened pack method:** Pack into containers, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. To ensure better color, cover with water containing 1 teaspoon ascorbic acid to each quart of water. Seal, label and freeze the berries.

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- **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 1/2-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze the berries.
- Freeze no more than 1 quart of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. One cubic foot will hold 30 quarts.

Canning

Strawberry Syrup (9 half pints)

6 1/2 cups of fresh or frozen berries
6 1/2 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 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 4 1/2 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 1/2-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims, adjust lids and process in a boiling-water canner for 10 minutes (both half-pints and pints).

Strawberry Jam (makes about 8 half-pint jars)

2 quarts crushed strawberries
6 cups sugar

Sterilize canning jars. Combine berries and sugar. Bring slowly to boiling, stirring occasionally until sugar dissolves. Cook rapidly until thick, about 40 minutes. As mixture thickens, stir frequently to prevent sticking. Pour hot jam into hot jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process jars 5 minutes in a boiling-water bath.

Uncooked Strawberry Jam from Fresh Fruit

(makes about 4 half-pint jars)

1 3/4 cups crushed strawberries (about 1 quart)
4 cups sugar
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 pouch liquid pectin

Measure 1 3/4 cups crushed strawberries. Place in an extra-large bowl. Add sugar, mix well and let stand for 10 minutes. Into a small bowl, measure lemon juice. Add liquid pectin and stir well. Continue stirring for 3 minutes. Pour jam into freezer containers or canning jars, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Cover container. Let stand at room temperature up to 24 hours until set. Label, date and refrigerate for up to three weeks, or freeze for up to one year.

References

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. (2006). *So easy to preserve* (5th ed.). Athens, GA: Author. Retrieved from <http://setp.uga.edu/>

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Find out more about Michigan Fresh at
msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/mi_fresh.

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