



LE PARFAIT PRESERVING STUDIO

The Beginner's Guide to Making Jam

Your first jar, from fresh fruit to a sealed lid. The simple French method, one clear step at a time. No special equipment, no jargon.

Preserving what's best



welcome

You can make jam this weekend

In France, jam is not a special-occasion project. It is a Sunday afternoon. The method is old enough that your grandmother's grandmother used the same few steps, and simple enough that a child can help stir.

This guide walks you through one small batch, start to finish: what to gather, the six-step method, a classic first recipe, and the handful of things that go wrong so you can avoid them. Make your first jar, and the rest of the pantry follows.

the kit

What you'll need

Most of it is already in your kitchen. Here is the honest list.

The essentials

- A wide, heavy-bottomed pan (stainless steel is perfect)
- Clean glass jars with lids that seal well
- A long-handled spoon and a ladle
- A clean towel for wiping rims and resting jars

Nice to have

- A jam or candy thermometer (the most useful upgrade)
- A wide-mouth funnel for clean rims
- A small plate in the freezer for the set test
- Labels, so February you knows what July you made

220°F

The one number worth knowing. Jam sets when it reaches a true gel, around 220°F / 104°C at sea level. A thermometer takes the guesswork out.

the method

Six steps, start to finish



1 Cook the fruit and sugar to a hard set

Bring the fruit to around 220°F / 104°C. The heat itself is doing preservation work, so a soft, weeping jam will not hold. Use a wide, heavy pan so water evaporates fast and the fruit does not scorch.

2 Warm the jars before filling

Run them through a hot dishwasher cycle, or rinse with boiling water from the kettle. The jars should be warm to the touch. A cold jar plus hot jam is how you crack the glass.

3 Fill while everything is hot, leaving a quarter inch

Ladle the jam into the warm jar to within a quarter inch of the rim. Do not over-fill. That small headspace is what lets the seal form.

4 Wipe the rim, seat the lid hand tight

With a Le Parfait twist top, hand tight is the right answer, never torqued. Over-tightening stops the lid from doing its job in the next step.

5 Invert the jar for at least one minute

Turn the sealed jar upside down onto a clean towel; most French cooks leave it five to ten minutes. The hot jam sterilizes the seal surface. This is the self-pasteurizing step.

6 Turn it right side up and let it cool

As the jar cools, the air inside contracts and pulls the lid down tight into a vacuum seal. You will often hear a soft pop an hour later. Sealed, it keeps in the pantry for at least 12 months.

your first batch

Strawberry Jam



You waited all year for good strawberries. Here is the classic way to keep them, so you can eat summer straight through winter.

Ingredients

1.2 kg hulled strawberries

1 kg jam sugar (or 1.2 kg caster sugar)

Juice of 1 lemon

Le Parfait Jam Jars

Makes several jars. Prep about 60 minutes plus macerating.

1. Choose ripe strawberries. Wash, discard any blemishes, hull, and cut into chunks. Leave the smallest berries whole.
2. Put the strawberries, sugar, and lemon juice in the pan. Stir well and leave to macerate for a few hours.
3. Bring to a simmer, then cook over high heat, stirring frequently: about 7 minutes with jam sugar, or 15 to 20 minutes with caster sugar.
4. Check the set: pour a few drops on a cold plate and tip it. The jam should run slowly, not flood.
5. Skim off any foam. Ladle straight into warm Le Parfait jars, leaving a quarter inch of headspace.
6. Seat the lids hand tight, invert for one minute, then turn right side up and let cool. Label your jars.

Tip

Low-pectin fruit like strawberry loves a squeeze of lemon. The acid helps the jam set and keeps the color bright.

the science, briefly

Why the French method is safe

High-sugar, high-acid jam is one of the most stable preserved foods there is. Three things keep your jar safe.

Sugar

A proper jam is roughly 60 to 65 percent sugar. That binds up the water so there is nothing left for mold or bacteria to grow on.

Acid

Most jam fruits are naturally acidic, around pH 3.0 to 3.5, well below the line where the bacteria behind unsafe canning can grow.

Hot fill

Pouring hot jam into a warm jar and inverting it puts the hottest part of the batch against the lid, sterilizing the seal.

Use this method for

Berries, stone fruit, citrus marmalades, and most apple, pear, and quince preserves. Add a little lemon juice to figs, ripe pears, and melons.

Do not use it for

Plain tomato, low-sugar or no-sugar fruit spreads, or any vegetable, meat, or fish. Those need refrigeration, freezing, or a tested water-bath process.

quick fixes

My jam did not set

Usually it did not get hot enough. You can re-cook a soft batch with a little more lemon, and pectin if needed, back up to 220°F.

How long does it keep?

Sealed and stored cool and dark, about a year. Once opened, refrigerate and use within three to four weeks.

When do I toss a jar?

A lost seal, any mold, a fermented smell, or an off color. When in doubt, throw it out.

keep going

There is a whole studio behind this guide

This is the short version. When you are ready for more fruit, more recipes, and answers to every question a jam maker eventually asks, it is all waiting online.

The Jam Making Guide

leparfait.us/pages/jam-making-guide

The full hub: start-here basics, seasonal recipes, and troubleshooting.

Seasonal recipes

leparfait.us/blogs/recipes

Strawberry, blueberry, wild blackberry, orange marmalade, and more.

Shop the jars

leparfait.us/collections/jam-jars

French glass jam jars and pots, made to be filled and refilled for years.



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