

Let's
Preserve



Blueberries

Recommended Varieties

All.

Quantity

A 24-quart crate weighs 36 pounds and yields 18 to 24 quarts. An average of 12 pounds makes a 7-quart canner load. An average of 7½ pounds is needed per canner load of 9 pints. An average of 1 pound makes 1 pint of frozen berries.

Quality

Select berries that are plump, firm, have a light-blue to blue-black color, and are of ideal maturity for eating fresh. Refrigerate for 1 to 2 days to improve flavor, then preserve them.

Preparation

Just before preparing, wash 1 or 2 quarts at a time and drain well. Do not soak berries.

FREEZING PROCEDURE

Don't freeze more than 2 pounds of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. Berries may be packed with syrup or dry sugar, individually quick frozen, or pureed.

TO MAKE A SYRUP PACK

Mix and dissolve 2½ cups of sugar in 4 cups of water. Add 1 cup of this syrup per quart of prepared fruit.

TO MAKE A DRY PACK

Mix ½ cup of dry sugar per quart of prepared fruit. To package, fill pint- or quart-size freezer bags to 3 or 4 inches from their tops, and squeeze out air. Leave 1-inch headspace, seal, label, and freeze. Before freezing, bags may be inserted into

reusable rigid plastic freezer containers for added protection against punctures and leakage.

TO USE THE INDIVIDUALLY QUICK FROZEN (IQF) METHOD OF FREEZING BLUEBERRIES

Berries may be frozen without washing; then wash just before being used. Another option is to wash and dry berries thoroughly on a clean towel before freezing. Spread dry berries in a single layer on a flat tray and place in freezer. Once hard, transfer to a closed container. Do not thaw before use.

To make crushed or pureed berries, crush or press washed berries through a fine sieve, or puree in a blender or food processor. Mix 1 to 1½ cups of sugar with each quart (2 pounds) of crushed berries or puree. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Pack into containers, leave headspace.

CANNING PROCEDURE

Wash jars. Prepare lids according to manufacturer's instructions. Berries in jars may be covered with your choice of water, apple, or white grape juice, or, more commonly, with a very light, light, or medium syrup. To make a very light syrup for a canner load of quarts, mix 1¼ cups of sugar in 10½ cups of water and heat to dissolve; or mix and dissolve 2¼ cups of sugar in 9 cups of water to make a light syrup; or 3¾ cups of sugar in 8¼ cups of water to make a medium syrup.

TO MAKE A HOT PACK

Place drained berries in boiling syrup, juice, or water and boil for 30 seconds. Fill clean jars with hot berries and cooking liquid, leaving ½-inch headspace.

NOTE

Select berries that are plump, firm, have a light-blue to blue-black color, and are of ideal maturity for eating fresh.

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Table 1. Recommended process times for raw or hot pack in a boiling water canner at designated altitudes.

STYLE OF PACK	JAR SIZE	PROCESS TIME AT AN ALTITUDE OF		
		0-1,000 FT (MIN)	1,001-6,000 FT (MIN)	ABOVE 6,000 FT (MIN)
Hot	Pints or quarts	15	20	25
Raw	Pints	15	20	25
	Quarts	20	30	35
Syrup	Half-pints or pints	10	15	20

TO MAKE A RAW PACK

Place drained berries in jars and cover with your choice of boiling water, juice, or syrup, leaving ½-inch headspace. Wipe sealing edge of jars with a clean, damp paper towel. Add lids, tighten screw bands, and process jars.

TO PROCESS IN A BOILING WATER CANNER

Fill canner halfway with water and preheat to 180°F for hot packs or 140°F for raw packs. Load sealed jars into the canner rack and lower with handles or load one jar at a time with a jar lifter onto rack in canner. Add water, if needed, to 1 inch above jars. Add cover. When water boils vigorously, lower heat to maintain a gentle boil and process for recommended time.

Blueberry Syrup

2½ cups prepared blueberry juice

3 cups sugar

½ cup corn syrup

2 tbsp lemon juice

Yields approx. 4 half-pint jars

TO PREPARE JUICE

Select 4 cups of table-ripe berries. Do not use underripe berries. Wash, cap, and remove stems. Crush berries and heat to a boil. Simmer for 1 or 2 minutes. Strain through a colander and drain until cool enough to handle. Strain the collected juice through a double layer of cheesecloth or jelly bag. Discard dry pulp. The yield of the juice should be about 2½ cups.

TO MAKE THE SYRUP

Sterilize canning jars. Combine ingredients in a saucepan. Bring to a rolling boil

and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and skim off foam. Pour into hot half-pint jars, leaving ¼-inch head space. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process for 10 minutes in a boiling water bath.

SOURCE: Andress, Elizabeth L., and Judy A. Harrison. 1999. *So Easy to Preserve*. 4th ed. Bulletin 989. Athens: University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

After processing is complete, remove jars from canner with a jar lifter and place on a towel or rack. Do not retighten screw bands. Air-cool jars for 12 to 24 hours. Remove screw bands and check lid seals. If the center of the lid is indented, wash, dry, label, and store jar in a clean, dark place. If lid is unsealed, examine and replace jar if defective, use new lids, and reprocess as before. Wash screw bands and store separately. Berries are best if consumed within a year and are safe as long as lids remained vacuum sealed.

For additional information about food preservation, visit the Penn State Food Safety Web site at foodsafety.cas.psu.edu and select the Home Food Preservation Web site, or contact Penn State Cooperative Extension in your county.

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