



Home-made Strawberry Preserve

Strawberries are cheap and plentiful in the summer, so why not take advantage of this by storing away some of their sunny, ripe flavour to brighten bleak winter days to come? In a preserve, the whole fruit is suspended intact in its own jelly, so none of the lusciousness is lost.

Makes 3 lb (1.35 kg)

This recipe first appeared in Sainsbury's Magazine.



Ingredients

2 lb (900 g) slightly under-ripe strawberries

1½ lb (700 g) preserving sugar

juice 1 large lemon

½ oz (10 g) butter

Equipment

You will also need two 0.5 litre jars, plus waxed discs to seal.

Method

First of all hull the strawberries and wipe each one with kitchen paper. Then layer them into a preserving pan, sprinkling them with sugar as you go. Leave them to soak in the sugar overnight, giving everything a stir around before you go to bed.

When you're ready to make the preserve, put four small plates into the freezer. Place the pan over a fairly low heat and allow the sugar to dissolve slowly. Give the pan a shake from time to time, but only give very gentle stirs, as you want to try very hard not to break up the fruit.

To check if the sugar is dissolved, lift up the spoon and, if there are no little crystals of sugar visible on it, the mixture is ready for boiling. Now turn the heat up to its highest setting, add the lemon juice and as soon as the mixture is up to what old-fashioned cooks used to call a rolling boil, put the timer on for 8 minutes exactly.

Then, when the 8 minutes are up, remove the mixture from the heat, put a teaspoonful on to one of the chilled plates, allow it to cool, then push the mixture with your little finger. If a crinkly skin has formed on the jam and there is no liquid left, then the preserve is set.

Allow the preserve to settle for 15 minutes, adding a small piece of butter if there's any scum, then pour into jars that have been washed, dried and heated in a moderate oven for 5 minutes to sterilise. Seal immediately with waxed discs, then cover with the lids or Cellophane and elastic bands. Wait until the preserve is completely cold, then label the jars.

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