

STRAWBERRY BASICS

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Selecting Strawberries

- Choose bright red, fresh and clean strawberries with a sweet scent. Choose berries with green caps still attached.
- Choose containers that are clean and in good condition. Make sure that the berries are not soft or moldy.
- It is better to buy smaller containers so that the strawberries are not crushed by the weight of the berries on top.



Fresh strawberries in a bowl.

Storing Strawberries

- Strawberries do not continue to ripen after harvest. Store in the refrigerator, unwashed, with the green caps attached, and loosely covered with plastic wrap. Rinse gently under slightly warm water just before using.
- Use within 3 to 4 days because they spoil quickly. Once they are cut and in syrup, they should be used within 1 day or frozen.

Freezing Strawberries

Select fully ripe, firm berries with a deep red color. Do not use strawberries that are soft, bruised, shriveled, mushy or moldy. Wash gently and remove caps. Adding sugar to fresh strawberries before freezing helps them to retain their texture and flavor. Use the Pectin Syrup Pack (see below) to help retain texture without using sugar.

Sugar Pack: Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar to 4 cups (1 $\frac{1}{3}$ pounds) whole, sliced or crushed strawberries and mix thoroughly. Stir until most of the sugar is dissolved or let stand for 15 minutes. Place in containers leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace for pints and 1-inch headspace for quarts.

Syrup Pack: To prepare syrup, dissolve 4 cups sugar in 4 cups water. Less sugar may be used, but the strawberries may not retain their texture as well. Put berries in freezer containers and cover with cold syrup. Leave $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace for pint containers and 1-inch headspace for quarts. Put a small piece of crumpled, water-resistant wrapping material on top to keep fruit under the syrup.

Pectin Syrup Pack: Combine 1 package powdered pectin and 1 cup water in a saucepan. Heat to boiling and boil 1 minute. Remove from heat and add $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups water. Cool. Pack as for Syrup Pack.

Dry Pack: Pack strawberries in freezer containers, seal and freeze. Or, place a layer of strawberries on a shallow tray and freeze. When partially frozen, package in freezer containers and promptly return to freezer.

If this document didn't answer your questions, please contact HGIC at hgic@clemson.edu or 1-888-656-9988.

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