



*“Teaching research-based practices of safe home food preservation to the residents of Solano and Yolo Counties.”*

### An Autumn Aroma--Apple Butter

A favorite smell in the autumn months is Apple Butter. Late August through October is the time of the year to obtain apples at very reasonable prices. While most food preservation recipes are very specific, fruit butters can be varied to individual tastes regarding sweetness and spiciness. Leave your windows open and the whole neighborhood will enjoy your efforts!



Fruit Butters are made by cooking fruit until soft, then pressing the cooked mixture through a sieve or processing in a food processor or blender until smooth and adding sugar. The resulting mixture is then cooked until thick enough to spread when cooled. Fruits may be blended to provide interesting colors and flavors. White or brown sugar or honey may be added and, although guidelines are given, you can make fruit butters as sweet as you desire. Darker sweeteners give a darker colored butter with light fruits and a more pronounced flavor with bland fruits, but the choice is up to the individual.

Spices usually added to fruit butters are a mixture of 2 teaspoons cinnamon and ½ teaspoon each of ground allspice and cloves per gallon (16 cups) of cooked butter. Ginger is good with pears; add 1 or 2 teaspoons ground ginger per gallon of butter. For a spicy flavor in light colored butter, cook with whole spices tied loosely in a cheesecloth bag; remove after butter is cooked. Lemon juice or cider vinegar may be added to bland fruits. Spices can be adjusted to your preference.

For making apple butter, any amount of apples may be used; but it takes about 1 pound of raw apples to make 1 half pint jar of apple butter. Peel and slice or quarter the apples. Use the apple alone or add a cup or two of apple juice or apple cider to start the cooking process. Adding a little extra liquid keeps the apples from burning as the cooking process begins. Water may be used but many people prefer adding a small amount of apple juice, apple cider, or apple cider vinegar; these seem to intensify the apple flavor and aroma.

Cook over low heat until the fruit is soft, stirring occasionally to prevent burning. Press the fruit through a sieve or food mill or process in small amounts in a food processor or blender until the fruit puree is smooth. Measure the pulp. Add about one half as much sugar (brown or white or honey) as there is fruit. For example, if you had 8 cups of fruit puree, you would add about 4 cups of sugar. Boil the fruit puree and sugar mixture rapidly, stirring often to prevent scorching. As the fruit butter becomes thick, reduce the heat. Add spices and lemon juice, if desired.

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Continue cooking until the butter is thick and almost falls off the spoon in flakes. Or test the doneness by placing a tablespoon on a plate that has been chilled in the freezer. The butter is done when no rim of liquid separates around the edge of the butter.

### **Cooking Fruit Butters in the Oven:**

Fruit butters may also be cooked to the appropriate thickness in a slow oven at 300 degrees F. Many people find this method easier and less messy. Place the cooked and processed fruit puree in a large flat pan. Cover the pan with foil to prevent spattering. Leave one end of the foil loose so the moisture can vent out of the pan. Place the pan in the oven and let cook. Stir every 15-25 minutes. The mixture is cooked to right consistency in 2 to 3 hours depending upon the amount of fruit butter you are making.

### **Processing:**

Regardless of the method used to cook down the fruit butter to the correct thickness, the mixture must be properly stored. Most people will want to can or freeze their finished product.

**Canning:** To process the fruit butter in a water bath canner, ladle the hot butter into one half pint or pint canning jars allowing ¼ inch headspace. Wipe the rims of the jars and place on the canning lids and ring bands. The canning lids should have been prepared according to the manufacturer's directions. Place the jars into the boiling water canner that has been half filled with hot water. Add additional hot water to the canner so that water covers the jars by at least one inch. Place the cover on the canner. Bring the canner to a boil over high heat. When the water in the canner reaches a gentle boil, begin timing. Process the half pint and pint jars for 10 minutes. When processing time is complete, let the jars remain in the canner for an additional 5 minutes. Then remove the jars from the canner. Cool in a draft-free location for 24 hours. Check jars to make sure they have sealed; store unsealed jars in the refrigerator for up to one month. Store sealed jars in a cool, dark and dry location.

**Freezing:** Fruit butters can also be frozen. Place cooked mixture into freezer containers allowing additional headspace to allow for freezing. Seal and place the containers in the freezer. Store for up to one year. To eat, thaw in the refrigerator. You can store in the refrigerator for up to one month.