

Susabelle's Peach Jam

This recipe takes some time, but is worth it. You can cheat and use pectin, but the flavor won't be as good. This recipe can be scaled up or down, just reduce the amounts as needed. I made a large batch, starting with 18 cups of peaches, which netted me about three quarts of preserves. It does cook down quite a bit.

Ingredients:

fresh ripe peaches, peeled and pitted, cut into chunks (1/2-1 inch)

For each three cups of peaches:

1 cup sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 pinch salt

Preparation:

In a large stainless or glass bowl, toss the peaches with the sugar and lemon juice. Let stand for one hour.

Cooking

In a very large stainless steel or enameled pot, place the peach mixture, the pinch of salt, and bring to a boil. (I use my ginormous stock pot – no risk of boiling over.) Turn down heat to medium high and cook for at least one hour, stirring frequently to prevent scorching. You can keep a lid partially on to increase the heat in the pot, but keep an eye on it so it won't boil over. After an hour, you want to start watching it for the gel stage. There are multiple ways to check for this. A candy thermometer should reach 220 degrees when placed in the boiling mixture. The drip test, if you're good, will work. Use a cool spoon and dip it in the jelly, lifting it up and turning it over so the juice sheets off the back of the spoon. Once you get one sheet, or one fat drip, you are probably at gel stage. Or, place a half-teaspoon of juice on a small plate and put in the freezer for one minute. Check to see if it is sticky and firm.

Overcooking jelly will make it hard to eat, so you want to be sure you catch it before it goes too far. The longer you cook it, the greater the risk of it scorching, so you will need to be stirring it constantly at that final stage. My last batch, which was large, took over 90 minutes to reach gel stage, but I live in a high-altitude area so the boiling point is 12 degrees lower. It takes everything longer to cook.

Once gel stage is reached, remove it from heat. Ladle into sterilized jars to within 1/2 inch of top, add rings and lids, and process in a hot water canner for 10 minutes (low altitude) or 15 minutes (high altitude) to seal.