



Preserving Foods:

Pears

SP 50-678, Revised May 2009

Many varieties of pears are grown in Oregon. Bartlett, Bosc, and Seckel are good varieties to preserve, however Anjou, Comice, Nelis and Forelle may also be preserved, depending on the end product.

It is important to harvest pears at the correct time. Pick them when they are mature in size but not yet fully ripe. If picked too soon, they will shrivel in storage and will lack in flavor. If picked when overmature, they will be coarse in texture, very soft, and often rotten on the inside. Commercial orchards use a pressure tester to tell when pears are ready to pick. Some county Extension offices have pressure testers and are willing to test the pears. If harvesting your own trees, count the days from bloom to harvest. Winter pears such as Anjou, Comice and Bosc will need a period of cool storage (35-40°F.) to ripen correctly (Anjou, 45-60 days; Bosc, 45 days; Comice, 30 days). Pears purchased from commercial packing houses should be ready to ripen.

Picked pears should be ripened in a cool place (60-70°F). Not all pears will ripen at the same time, but inspect them daily. Pears are ripe when the ground color changes, then flesh near the stem end yields to gentle pressure and there is a pear "smell". Use immediately or store in the refrigerator until ready to use. Pears to be canned should be firmer than for eating fresh. Very soft pears can be used in fruit butters, fruit leathers or pear sauce.

Each pear variety has an identifiable shape, color, and unique flavor of its own. Learn to identify and appreciate each for its particular character and taste. Many of the common varieties are also available with red skins, which does not change the flavor, but just contribute to eye appeal.

Pears are best canned, dried, and made into butters. They also make good relishes and chutneys. Freezing fresh pears is generally not recommended. Cooked pears can be frozen with limited success.

Canning

Note: Asian pears, apple pears, and Oriental pears (which are actually a different tree fruit crop) must be acidified before canning. See Canning Asian Pears (SP 50-694) for instructions.

It will take 2-3 pounds of pears to fill a 1 quart jar. One bushel (50 lbs.) will yield 20-25 quarts.

Pears must be processed in a boiling water canner at 212°F. Ask your county Extension office for time adjustments if you live above 1,000 feet.

Wash pears, peel, cut in halves or quarters and core. To prevent darkening during preparation, put the cut fruit into water containing 1teaspoon ascorbic acid powder per gallon of water. Or,

crush and dissolve six 500-milligram vitamin C tablets per gallon of water. Drain just before heating or packing raw.

Pears canned with syrup will hold their shape better and maintain better flavor. Fruit juices may be used instead of syrup, however, because of the mild flavor of pears, these juices will impart their flavor to the pears. For a 9-pint load, use the following proportions:

<u>Types of syrup</u>	<u>Cups water</u>	<u>Cups sugar</u>
Very light	6 ½	¾
Light	5 ¾	1 ½
Medium	5 ¼	1 ¼
Heavy	5	3 ¼

Use either the hot pack or the raw pack method:

Hot pack - Heat fruit in hot syrup. If fruit is very juicy, add sugar without additional liquid. Pack hot pears in jars and cover with boiling syrup, leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles by running a plastic spatula or blunt knife between the jar and the fruit. Wipe rims and adjust lids. Process pints for 20 minutes in a boiling water canner; quarts 25 minutes.

Raw pack - Pack fruit, cover with boiling syrup, leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe rims and adjust lids. Process pints 25 minutes in a boiling water canner; quarts 30 minutes.

Variations: The processing time is the same as hot pack or raw pack for all variations.

Cinnamon pears - Add a few sticks of cinnamon and a few drops of red food coloring to the syrup before heating the pears. Remove the cinnamon before packing the pears into jars. A tablespoon of red hot candies can also be added to each quart jar.

Mint pears - Add a few drops of mint oil and green food coloring to the syrup (amount varies with personal taste). Cook pears 10 minutes in the syrup before packing.

Orange or pineapple pears - Can the pears in orange juice or pineapple juice in place of the sugar syrup. Fresh ginger sliced into the jar will give an added flavor and zip.

Brandied Pears (from Ball Blue Book)

10 pounds ripe, unblemished pears

3 pounds granulated sugar

4 cups water

3 cups white brandy

Pare, halve and core pears. Combine sugar and water to make syrup. Cook pears in syrup one layer at a time, just until tender (about 5 minutes). Place cooked pears in a large bowl; set aside. After all pears are cooked, continue cooking syrup until thickened (about 15 minutes). Remove from heat. Add brandy. Pack hot pears into jars; cover with hot syrup leaving ¼ inch headspace. Adjust lids, process 15 minutes in a boiling water canner. Yields approximately 4 quarts.

Pear Sauce - Pear sauce is great when needing a mild flavored sauce to mix with other flavors. Make cooked pear puree by putting through food strainer or mill. Add sugar to taste. Reheat to simmering (185-210°F.) and pack leaving ½ inch headspace. Process in boiling water canner, 15 minutes for pints and 20 minutes for quarts.

Drying Pears

Pears are excellent dried. It is best to dry fully ripe pears, rather than soft, mushy ones. Preparation: Wash and peel pears. (Pear skin tends to become tough and grainy when dried.) Cut into ¼ to ½ inch slices. Pears tend to darken quickly, so pretreatment is recommended for a light product. To prevent browning, coat with ascorbic acid solution (2½ teaspoons ascorbic acid crystals to each cup of water).

Drain well and spread in a thin layer on drying trays. Dry until pliable and leather in the sun, oven, or dehydrator at 140°F.

Dried pears are great eaten as snacks or can be slightly plumped in water and used in breads, chutney, cookies, fritters or granola.

Leathers or Fruit Rolls

Pear leather is a bit grainy and tasteless by itself. However, it is great mixed with other fruits since it adds body to the puree and mellows the flavors. Try mixing pears with berries, apricots, peaches and plums.

Pickles

Pears can be successfully pickled or made into chutney. Select firm ripe pears for pickling. Many reliable commercial canning books have pickled pear, chutney, and relish recipes.

Pickled Pears (from USDA HG Bulletin 92)

2 quarts sugar
1 quart white vinegar
1 pint water
8 cinnamon sticks, 2 inch pieces
2 tablespoons whole cloves
2 tablespoons whole allspice
8 pounds Seckel pears (4-5 quarts)

Combine sugar, vinegar, water and cinnamon; add cloves and allspice that are tied in a clean, thin cloth. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, about 30 minutes.

Wash pears, remove skins, and the entire blossom end; the stems may be left on if desired. To keep pears from darkening during preparation, use ascorbic acid or vinegar salt solution. Drain before using.

Add pears to the boiling syrup and continue simmering for 20-25 minutes. Pack hot pears into clean, hot pint jars; add one 2-inch piece cinnamon per jar and cover with boiling syrup to ½ inch from top of jar. Adjust jar lids. Process in boiling water canner for 20 minutes.

Butters, Preserves

Pear sauce spiced with ground nutmeg, cinnamon and flavored with orange juice or orange rind gives a great butter. Pear butter is also great spiced with ginger. The sauce should be cooked until desired thickness is obtained, being careful to stir often so mixture will not scorch. The sauce can also be cooked down in the microwave, oven or slow cooker. Fill hot sterile jars with the hot butter, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Process 5 minutes in boiling water canner for half pints and pints.

Pretty Pear Preserves

4 pounds ripe pears chopped fine
1 medium bottle of maraschino cherries, diced
1 large can pineapple, drained and diced
Sugar (about 4 pounds)

Wash, pare and remove core from pears. Cut into small pieces. Measure chopped pears, pineapple, and cherries with syrup into a large kettle; for every cupful of fruit add ¾ cup of sugar. Cook gently until preferred consistency (about 40 minutes). Pour into hot sterilized jars and process in a boiling water canner 5 minutes for half pint and pints.

For additional information on preserving pears, contact your local county Extension office.

Source: Family Food Education Program