



## ***Food Safety & Preservation:*** **Low Sugar Fruit Spreads**

*SP 50-765, Revised May 2009*

Low and no sugar fruit spreads are becoming very popular as people are changing their diets and reducing their intake of sugar. Over the past few years, many commercial pectin products have been developed for making low sugar spreads at home. It's important to use one of these commercial low sugar preparations rather than reducing the amount of sugar called for in regular jam and jelly recipes. Be aware that the yield of fruit spread made without added sugar will be smaller than that with sugar added.

### **Ingredients**

#### **Low-Methoxyl Pectin**

Low-methoxyl pectins are natural pectic substances derived from citrus fruits. While regular pectins depend on sugar and acid to form a gel, low-methoxyl pectin forms a bond with calcium ions in the absence of sugar and acid. The commercial pectin products on the market include a form of calcium. If purchasing pure low-methoxyl pectin marketed in health food stores, you need to be sure that a calcium salt is included with the package.

There are several commercial low-methoxyl pectin products on the market. Each comes with recipes for reduced and/or no sugar spreads. When using these products, it is important to follow the manufacturer's directions that come with the product.

### **Sweeteners**

**Natural sweeteners** - To make an all fruit spread without added sugar, you can use concentrated, frozen, white grape or apple juice as the natural sweetener. For every 3 cups of crushed fruit or juice, add 1 cup of concentrated fruit juice. The amount of concentrate can be adjusted to suit your taste.

**Note:** You'll need to read the labels on the fruit juice concentrate. Some products have fructose or other sweeteners added, where others are all natural fruit juice. Different brands also have different degrees of sweetness.

**Artificial sweeteners** - Persons on therapeutic diets (such as diabetics) should check low-sugar jam instruction sheets or sugar substitute package labels for information on artificial sweetener use.

### **Preparing and Processing**

Follow preparation instructions in pectin package. Process low and no sugar spreads in a boiling water canner for 10 minutes. After the product is opened, it should be stored in the refrigerator.

**Caution:** Low sugar spreads should only be made from fruits (which contain acid), since these products don't include enough sugar to act as a preservative.

## Other Low Sugar Spread Alternatives

**Fruit spreads using Clear-Jel\*** - When making fruit spreads thickened with Clear-Jel, make small batches and store in the refrigerator.

### Basic Recipe

¼ cup plus 1 Tablespoon Clear-Jel

½-1 cup sugar (more or less depending on sweetness desired)

2 cups crushed fruit or juice

1 Tablespoon bottled lemon juice

Mix sugar and Clear-Jel. If sugar is omitted, mix Clear-Jel with a small amount of cold fruit juice in a blender. Combine the sugar mixture with the fruit or juice in a large saucepan. Cook on high heat until mixture comes to a boil, stirring constantly. Add lemon juice and boil for 1 minute. Pour into half-pint or pint jars. Let cool and store in the refrigerator.

**Note:** If the mixture is too thick, add a small amount of juice; if too thin, mix a little more Clear-Jel with a small amount of cold juice or water and add to the mixture. Bring to a boil. The spread will thicken as it cooks. You can gauge the thickness as the fruit spread is cooking.

For a no sugar spread, concentrated fruit juice can be used in place of some of the juice in the recipe.

\*Clear-Jel is a waxy cornstarch that has been chemically modified to produce a good consistency even after heating. Ask your county Extension office about the availability of regular (not instant) Clear-Jel in your area.

**Fruit spreads thickened with gelatin** - Unflavored gelatin can be used to thicken fruit pulp or juice to make unsweetened jams and jellies. These products have a texture similar to gelatin desserts. They must be stored in the refrigerator and used within a month. Do not process jams and jellies made with gelatin.

### Basic Recipe (makes 1 pint)

1½ teaspoon unflavored gelatin

1½ Tablespoon cold water

3 cups crushed prepared fruit

1 Tablespoon lemon juice

Sugar or honey can be added to taste.

Soften gelatin in cold water. Combine fruit and sweeteners in a sauce pan. Place over high heat and stir constantly until mixture comes to a boil. Remove from heat, add softened gelatin; return to heat and continue to cook for 1 minute. Remove from heat; blend in lemon juice. Ladle into clean jars. When cool, store in refrigerator and use within a month.

Source: Family Food Education Program