
Canning the Best Blueberry Jam with Karen Solomon

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- [Karen] Welcome food eater, I'm Karen Solomon. The author of, Asian Pickles, Jam It, Pickle It, Cure It, and Can It, Bottle It, Smoke It. And also the blogger at ksolomon.com. Welcome to my kitchen. In this class we are going to cover how to prepare your jars for sterilization. How to make to make the most delicious blueberry jam you've ever had. How to can that jam. And also how to add your own flavor additives to personalize your jam and make it your own.

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- This blueberry jam recipe makes four half-pint jars of finished jam. To make your jam, you're gonna need about three pounds of delicious blueberries. Really. Make sure the blueberries are good enough to eat out of hand, because if you don't have good-tasting berries, you're not gonna have good-tasting jam. If you don't have a kitchen scale, three pounds of blueberries is about 48 ounces. Now, usually those little plastic clamshells that you buy in the grocery store, the big ones, those are about 11 ounces apiece. So about 4 1/2 of those will suffice. In addition to the blueberries, you'll also need a pound and a half of sugar, which is three cups, one teaspoon of kosher salt, two teaspoons of fresh lemon juice, and a small pat of butter. I'm gonna show you why we need that in just a moment. Other things you wanna have on hand include some nice, adorable dishtowels and some potholders. In addition to that, you will need a kitchen scale. You don't have to have one. But it really, really helps. I highly recommend owning one of these. It's not just great for jam-making, but also for baking, for weighing out your own postage, for weighing your pet hamster, it has a million different uses in the kitchen. You'll also need some kind of juicer, various measuring cups and measuring spoons, and small holding bowls. And a wooden spoon. Okay, let's talk about wooden spoons. Many people have wooden spoons in their kitchen. And most people, when they talk about making jam, reach for this, the rounded wooden spoon. However, I much prefer this kind of wooden spoon, that is, a scraper. This is gonna make sure that your jam does not stick to the bottom of the pot. You also need a chopstick to help get the air bubbles out of your jars for canning. I also highly recommend a canning funnel and a good set of canning tongs. You'll also need four half-pint canning jars. And also for your jars, you're going to need four bands and four brand-new canning lids. That's essential for canning these to keep them shelf-stable. Be sure to check your jars. Run your finger around the rim on the outside to ensure there's no cracks or chips in the glass. That's gonna keep your jam from sealing properly. Just make sure that your jars are completely clean and odor-free. You're also gonna need a canning rack for the bottom of the pot. Now, this is not a traditional canning rack. But this is what I use. This is actually a silicone trivet. It's very stretchy. It can withstand the heat of boiling water. And, because of its stretchiness, it can fit to whatever size canning pot you're going to use. And all those other days of the year, when you're not actually canning, it folds up really small, or it's a beautiful table decoration. I'm also gonna show you how to do a done-ness test for your jam, and that involves using a small dish or saucer. We'll pop that in the freezer in a little while. That's gonna help us figure out if our jam has set or not. In addition to that, we're also going to need a large stockpot. This is going to be used both to sterilize the jars, and also to process the jars, to make them shelf-stable. You wanna have enough water in there to cover both

the jars and the canning rack, with water, by at least two inches. For cooking your jam, you'll need a tall, heavy-bottomed pot.

Chapter 3 - Make Jam

Prepare jars and fruit

- The first step in making your blueberry jam is to sterilize your jars. Now, you can start your jars in cold water and then bring it up to a rapid boil, or you can put your jars into a giant kettle of boiling water. So we're gonna be putting glass jars into a scalding hot pot of boiling water. To do that, you really want to use the right tools. I highly recommend you get yourself some good canning tongs. And just so you know, this rounded oval part is the part that goes onto the jar. This part is the handle. If you're putting the jars into hot water, make sure you put it in on its side. So, that the jar gently fills with water and then drop it to the bottom of the pot. Now that the jars are in the pot, we're gonna let the water come to a very rapid boil. And once that boil happens, we're gonna set a timer for 10 minutes. Those jars have to boil for 10 minutes for full sterilization. Once that part happens, we're gonna turn off the heat and just let the jars sit in the pot until we're ready to use them. Now, while those are sterilizing, we're gonna make our jam. To get the weight on the blueberry's, we're gonna need to zero balance our scale, which means putting the bowl on top and turning the scale on. For this recipe we're using three pounds of fruit to one and 1/2 pounds of sugar. So the ratio is about two to one. So you can scale this recipe anyway you wish as long as you keep that same ratio. There should be twice as much fruit by weight as there is sugar. I seriously love blueberry's. They're one of my most favorite fruits. And that is three pounds. Now that we have them measured out, we're gonna pour them into a colander, and we're gonna give 'em a quick rinse just to wash 'em off. In addition, you need to sort through them a little bit and pull out any mushy berries or any of these little stems.

Make jam on stovetop

- To start the blueberry jam, you want to take your blueberries and put them into your large heavy pot. To that you're going to add your teaspoon of kosher salt, and also a little bit of water, about 1/3 of a cup or so, just to get the pot bubbling. Put that over medium-high heat and cover it. You want the blueberries to burst and excrete as much of their juice as possible. You'll know that you're ready to move on when the blueberries themselves are very, very juicy and there's a lot of juice from the fruit in the pot. Stir this frequently to make sure that all of the blueberries are cooking evenly and that it doesn't stick to the bottom of the pot. This is really important. I always like to put a little salt in my fruit, because I like the way it tastes. It really brings out and enhances the flavor of the fruit, and also it helps to draw out the moisture from the berries. The berries are looking great. They've released a ton of their juice, and we're ready to add the sugar and the butter. The sugar is, of course, to make it sweet and also to help the jam to set. The butter, just a little tiny bit, coats the surface and helps reduce a whole bunch of foam that's gonna happen as the jam is cooking. So it's not really for flavor or anything, but it's just to help make the cooking process a little bit easier. Add three cups of sugar. And one little pat of butter. I'm stirring this in, and also I'm taking the lid off the pot, because for the rest of the jam-making process this needs to be uncovered. Oh my God, that smells so good. It smells like blueberry muffins. And I can feel that it's starting to get just a little bit viscous already. There's a little bit of drag on the spatula as I'm stirring the blueberries. I'm really scraping it from the bottom to make sure that nothing is sticking. Now that the lid is off, I'm gonna turn the heat up to high. Okay, the jam is on the boil. Once the lid is off, you want to let it boil for

about 15 or 20 minutes. You want the liquid in the pot to reduce by about half, and also very importantly, you want to stir it often. Just really scrape it up from the bottom. There is nothing worse than losing a pot of jam because it got burnt and sticky, eww! At the end we're gonna add about two teaspoons of lemon juice just to enhance its flavor a little bit. And I'm gonna show you how to test for doneness using that cold plate that we put in the freezer. Any time you're working with citrus, it's always a good idea to give it a little roll before you cut it. This helps the fruit exude a lot more juice. And we're just gonna juice half of this into this little bowl. We only need a couple of teaspoons. All right, this is our finished jam here. See how when I scrape it with the spatula it parts all the way across the pot? That's what you're looking for. Also, the liquid level of the juice has reduced by about half. This up here is the line where we started, and then now we're about halfway down the pot. We're gonna give it the cold plate test to make sure that it's set. We take our plate from the freezer, take a little spoonful of the jam, and let it sit on the plate for about 30 seconds or so. I know my jam is set when I tip the plate and it all sticks together in one big mass and it moves very slowly down the cold plate. Keep in mind that the jam in your pot is going to thicken up and continue to set after you have turned off the heat. The next thing we're gonna do is add just a little bit of lemon juice, just a couple of teaspoons, because it really helps to brighten up the flavor of the jam. Also keep in mind that if you're adding any extra flavorings to your jam, such as orange juice and orange zest, or fresh herbs like thyme, kaffir lime leaf or sorrel, extracts like vanilla extract or almond extract, or any kind of booze like a nutty fruity booze like Chambord or Kirsch or Frangelico, anything like that, this is the time to add it now. This jam is finished. It is ready to be canned. When you take the jars out to fill them with the jam, put the lid back on the pot and turn the heat onto high. You're gonna need a big pot of boiling water to process your finished filled jars.

Chapter 4 - Can Jam Jars

Process jam jars in boiling water

- We have our gorgeous, finished, hot blueberry jam and we have our jars fresh from the sterilizer. Now, we're gonna pour the jam into the jars using our friend, the canning funnel. We're going to use a ladle, or you can use a one cup measuring cup to fill the jars with the jam. You want to leave a little bit of room at the top about a quarter to a half an inch or so. And then, move on and fill the next jar. If you need to top off the jars at the end, feel free. Just try not to get any of the jam on the rims. You're gonna need a chopstick or some kind of other long stick to go in and poke out any air bubbles that you see inside the jar. Why? Because botulism, a foodborne potentially fatal disease that one gets from canned food likes to grow inside of air pockets. Don't freak out about botulism in your canned food, okay? I promise you that driving your car or walking down the street has a much higher incidence of injury and fatality than eating the delicious blueberry jam that we made today. The jars are reusable. You can use them again and again as long as they are clean, odor free, and there's no cracks or anything around the rim. For canning though, you want to make sure that these, the bands, are clean, and also that the lids are brand new every time. These have to be new every time. Many people, for canning, take both of them and simmer them in a pot of water for about ten minutes, both to sterilize them and also to soften this little band of wax around the outside. The next thing that we're gonna do is take a cloth, a clean cloth, and dip the corner of it into our pot of boiling water. We're gonna take that hot cloth and wipe around the edges of the jar. Get the whole rim and make sure that it's clean and free of jam. This way you'll be sure to get a really good seal when you process the jars. Next we're gonna get our new lids, and just let those rest right on top. And then we're gonna put a band over each lid and you just wanna put it on fingertip-tight. Don't

screw it on as hard as you possibly can. There needs to be a little bit of space for the air that's inside of the jar to come out the top to create a good vacuum seal. At this point this jam is ready to go. If you wanted to, you could take them, let them cool completely, and put them in the refrigerator and enjoy them for many many months. But we want these to be shelf stable, so we are gonna go ahead and hot water bath process these for about fifteen minutes. Okay, we're putting our lid back on. We're letting it come to a very high boil and then that's when we're gonna set the timer for fifteen minutes. Okay, these have processed for fifteen minutes. If you listen carefully you'll be able to hear the little vacuum seal going "ping". Did you hear that? That was four little "ping"s to let me know that each one of these jars has successfully sealed. Now every time you can you don't always hear the ping. Sometimes it happens in the pot, sometimes it just happens, so the best way to check to ensure that your jars have a good seal on them is with your thumb. I'm touching the top, right in the center, and feeling that the vacuum seal is completely solid and that there's no movement at all. There shouldn't be any bounce onto my thumb from the seal. That's how you know that your jars are ready to be stored on the shelf. Now even though you may think that you're going to remember what these jars are, several months from now I promise you that once you start canning and get multiple jars, you will probably forget what you made and when you made it, so I highly recommend getting some labels and putting them on your jars. Now we have cute little canning labels here, but you don't have to use these; if you'd like, you can just use a Sharpie and some masking tape. I don't know if you noticed but there was a little bit of jam left in the bottom of that pot. That is a snack for the chef. This is a really fresh, full-flavored, beautiful blueberry jam. At home, on your toast, your pound cake, your ice cream, or your seared pork chop. Go ahead, try it. It's really good. If you want to personalize your jam and add some additional funky flavors to it, by all means do so. But be sure to keep those additions really light, otherwise you're gonna mask the flavor of the blueberries themselves. Mmm, it's really good. (laughs)