

## Making jellies and preserving wild fruits

Contributed by gil

Jelly makes a better use of some of the pippier and stronger flavoured fruits from the wild, which are also useful for liqueurs and a dessert called cheese!

Fruit jellies In theory you could make jelly from the same fruits as for jam, but strawberry jelly just doesn't seem right. Jelly seems to be best made from cultivated fruits that are quite tart, or from wild / hedgerow fruits, which have lots of flavour but perhaps not a very edible pulp :Cultivated fruits for

jellies Damson Gooseberry Quince Blackcurrant Redcurrant Raspberry (which would give you the taste, but seedless) Wild fruits for jellies Sloe Elderberry Rowan Rosehip Hawthorn (with apple) Crab apple Barberry Jar size : 6-12oz. Equipment for making fruit jellies (\* = in addition to typical jam-making gear) Clean, washed empty jars with screw lids Adhesive labels For dealing with fruit : Knives and chopping board (if fruit requires it) For initially cooking and straining the fruit : Large [stainless steel] pan Long-handled wooden spoon \* Jelly bag (old pillowcase, muslin cloth, jelly bag [you can buy this in hardware/cookery shops] \* Strong string / bootlace \* Something to suspend the bag from \* Large bowl / pan to strain the juice into For measuring sugar and juice : Weighing scales \* Measuring jug For making the jelly : Large [stainless steel] pan Long-handled wooden spoon Clean roasting tin or casserole dish (for warming sugar) To skim off scum : A tea / dinner plate Slotted or similar spoon, or any spoon To check setting point : A cold tea plate A teaspoon To pot jelly into jars without too much mess : A ladle A gravy boat, jug, or anything with a good wide spout A tea towel to get hot jars out of oven and hold them while filling with hot jam Method for making fruit jellies : (a general method which works for all fruit) : 1. Wash and prepare fruit 2. Add chopped up cooking apple if desired, to bulk out or help setting 3. Place in preserving pan, just cover with water 4. Cook gently till tender 5. Strain into a mixing bowl through muslin / jelly bag / old cotton pillowcase [but without holes] (for 2 to 8 hours, or overnight). 6. Measure liquid from bowl into pan (use ladle + measuring jug) 7. Weigh out 1lb sugar to 1 pt liquid, and put sugar to warm in a slow oven 8. Put clean jars in oven to warm too 9. Heat liquid gently till about to simmer 10. Add sugar and stir till dissolved (do not allow to boil yet) 11. Bring to a gentle rolling boil, and boil till setting point is reached 12. Pot into warmed, clean jars 13. Put the lids on immediately while hot, or wait till completely cold to do this. Yield : variable Uses : On toast, or with ice cream, rice pudding, etc. Some are good on their own with meat, poultry, game and sausages, or nut roast-type dishes, or add a tablespoonful to gravy. Notes : 1. Stage 5 : I tie my pillowcase up to a wooden clothes horse with a thick walkingboot lace. This part can be messy &ndash; put newspaper on the floor, and get someone to give you a hand. With the pillowcase in the big mixing bowl, one person holds it open and the other pours in the fruit and liquid. The pillowcase can then be tied around its neck and tied up to drip, making sure the bowl follows beneath. 2. Do NOT squeeze the bag to get more juice out unless you don't mind cloudy jelly, and you also don't want to try making fruit cheese. 3. Stage 8 : use smaller jars than for jam &ndash; 6-12oz are fine. 4. Stage 11 : Length of time to reach setting point varies with the fruit's setting ability and the quantity of liquid in your batch. Doing more than six pints at a time is not great - the longer you boil for can impair the flavour of the jelly. And you only want a gentle boil, not Mt Etna in a pan. Fruit jelly recipes / notes elaborating the above Redcurrant jelly Yields : 3lb currants + about 1 1/2 pts water to cover > 3 and a bit pts juice > 4lb jelly 4lb currants + about 2pts water to cover > 4pts juice > 5 3/4 lb jelly Gooseberry jelly (wild or tame) with or without elderflower 4lb gooseberries Water to just cover fruit in pan Sugar Elderflower heads (3-6), if wished or available at the same time Yield : 2 and 1/8 pts of juice (+ 2lb 2oz sugar) > 3lb jelly 1. Wash gooseberries 2. Put in pan and just cover with water 3. Add elderflowers if using 4. Simmer till tender, stirring occasionally 5. Turn into jelly bag and set to drip for 2-8 hrs or overnight 6. Measure juice into pan and warm up 7. Add 1lb sugar per pint of juice, stir to dissolve (do not allow to boil till after this) 8. Boil to setting point (takes approx 30 mins at electric ring 3 - 4) 9. Pot into clean, warmed jars, put lids on 10. Label when cold Very scummy (slippery and rubbery) but easy to skim. Turns out very pinky-orange, despite using green gooseberries. Rowan jelly 1 carrier bag full of rowans on stalks Water to just cover fruit in pan Sugar Lemon juice Yield : 3 1/2 pts of juice >>> about 5lb jelly 1. Wash rowans and strip from stalks 2. Put in pan and just cover with water 3. Add juice of half a lemon 4. Simmer till tender, then mash down with a potato masher 5. Turn into jelly bag and set to drip for 2-8 hrs or overnight 6. Measure juice into pan and warm up 7. Add 1lb sugar per pint of juice, stir to dissolve (do not allow to boil till after this) 8. Boil to setting point (takes approx 20 mins at electric ring 4) 9. Pot into clean, warmed jars, put lids on 10. Label when cold The juice can be quite thick, and quite foamy-scummy, but is easy to skim. USING HEDGEROW AND OTHER FRUITS Wild gooseberries, crab apples, elderberries, sloes, rowan berries, rosehips, barberries, or hawthorn berries. Also works for damsons, tame gooseberries, apples 1. To make jelly (a general method which works for all these fruits) : 1. Wash and prepare fruit Gooseberries, sloes, rowans : remove long stalks Elderberries, hawthorns : strip from stalks with a fork Crab apples, rosehips : half or quarter Damsons : no need to stone 2. Add chopped up cooking apple if desired, to bulk out or help setting (especially rosehips or elderberries [low in pectin, hard to set], hawthorns [for bulk]) 3. Place in preserving pan, just cover with water 4. Cook gently till tender 5. Strain into a mixing bowl through muslin / jelly bag / old cotton pillowcase [but without holes] (for 2 to 8 hours, or overnight). 6. Measure liquid from bowl into pan (use ladle + measuring jug) 7. Weigh out 1lb sugar to 1 pt liquid, and put sugar to warm in a slow oven 8. Heat liquid gently till about to simmer 9. Add sugar and stir till dissolved (do not allow to boil yet) 10. Bring to a gentle rolling boil, and boil till setting point is reached 11. Pot into warmed, clean jars 12. Put the lids on immediately while hot, or wait till completely cold to do this. 13. If wished, you can then use the fruit pulp to make fruit 'cheese' as in detailed below. Or put it on the compost heap. Yields : approximately 1 lb jelly to 1.5 lb of wild not very pulpy fruit Sundry cooking notes Sloe Works fine. Similar to damson, but thinner juice. Pink rubbery scum. Sloe and apple 1/3 sloes : 2/3 apple is OK as a mix if not many sloes around. Does not need lemon juice. About 30-40 mins to setting point on electric ring 4. Elderberry Variable in outcome. A poor setter. Add lemon juice. Or you could try mixing with [crab-]apple for extra pectin. Large quantities of pure elder can take more than 45 mins boiling to setting point. Can be a bit syrupy, but keeps fine. Rosehip Mash cooking fruit down in pan with a potato

masher to extract juice. Difficult to set properly even with lemon juice, I find. Turns out syrupy, not gently wobbling / trembling on the spoon, as a good jelly should. But keeps fine nonetheless. An apple mix may be easier. Crab-apple Very quick to set (8 mins for 2pts juice when I squeezed the bag; 15 mins when I left it alone to drip). Don't mash down in the pan, as the result will be sludge not juice, which makes it hard to drip through the bag. Very scummy (this also applies to apple mixes with other fruits). Damson Easy. Thick juice. Very scummy (rubbery), but easy to skim. 45 mins boiling to set about 6lb final yield. Quince Very quick to set (alarmingly so) : 10 mins. Can pad out quantity with apple. To make hedgerow fruit liqueur (for example, sloe gin) : You can use all the above fruits, except maybe hawthorn (never tried it or seen a recipe). Also works a treat with Seville oranges and brandy [alcoholic marmalade] Use gin, vodka, or brandy as a base spirit, depending on preference. Rum probably has too much taste of its own. For each 75cl bottle of spirits, you need : 2-3 large jars : well-washed mayonnaise or gherkin jars are ideal 12 oz fruit 9 oz sugar (or less if you want a drier liqueur)

1. Prepare the fruit, as for jelly
2. Prick sloes all over with a fork (if using)
3. Divide fruit between jars
4. Divide sugar between jars
5. Divide liqueur between jars, and keep any over
6. Shake, and put in a cupboard
7. Shake daily for the first week, then weekly, then fortnightly, till sugar is dissolved
8. After 3 months, sieve out the solid fruit, filter liquid through muslin / old white cotton hanky, and bottle.
9. If wished, you can then use the soaked fruit to make jelly as in recipe

1. Yield : slightly more than the bottle of spirits you started with. Notes : 1. Stage 6 : If started in autumn, will usually be ready in time for Yule / Hogmanay; Seville oranges in season in January/February, so ready April / May / Beltane. 2. Stage 8 : If the liquid is very cloudy, put it back in the jars with a bit of pectic enzyme (tip of a teaspoonful) for a couple of weeks to clear and deposit sediment, then strain / pour carefully / siphon into bottle. Spiced jellies and liqueurs You can add whole (not powdered) spices, if wished, to either the jelly or liqueur-making process : root ginger (crab apple, gooseberry); cinnamon sticks or cloves (crab apple, orange); coriander seed (Seville oranges); also allspice, pepper, juniper (with sloes, and to gin-based liqueurs). Put them in the jelly pan during cooking (Stage 4) or into the liqueur jars with the fruit and spirit (Stage 3). The bits will then be filtered out in the pillowcase or hanky. Worth bashing the spices a bit first, with pestle, knife handle-end, rubber hammer etc., to release aromatic oils. Herb and flower jellies Use a neutral-ish base, such as apple, crab apple or gooseberry as a vehicle for the herb / flower flavour. Put the herbs / flowers in at the same stage as for spices. They will be filtered out in the pillowcase, so if you want herb sprigs in the jars, add fresh ones when potting the finished jelly. Some herbs to use : rosemary, thyme, mint, sage Elderflower and gooseberry jelly is a classic combination (one or more heads per pint of juice, according to taste). Anyone got a recipe for rose petal or scented geranium leaf jelly ? (same principles apply) To make fruit 'cheese' (only really works with damsons) : 1. Push the cooked fruit pulp from jelly-making through a sieve (nylon might be better than metal), into measuring jug 2. Put the result into a pan (an ordinary saucepan is fine) 3. For every pound / pint of pulp, add 1lb sugar 4. Heat gently till sugar dissolves 5. Cook gently until you can draw a spoon along the bottom of the pan and it does not fill up with liquid afterwards (as with making chutney) 6. Grease small containers with butter, and pour or spoon the stuff in. 7. Leave to cool and go solid, put a lid on, and keep in a cool place (pantry or fridge) Yield : miniscule compared to effort (1 small lunchbox from pulp from a batch of jelly) Notes : 1. Stage 1 takes ages (took me hours). Is fruit cheese worth doing more than once, just out of curiosity? 2. Yoghurt pots or small plastic lunchboxy things are fine, also small glass jars. The neck should be wider than the base if you want to turn it out, serve it upside down on a plate as a dessert, or slice it. [Click here for gbst's introduction to jam and jelly making](#)  
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