

Strawberry Jam with Currant or Gooseberries

In the event you do not have any apple pectin on hand, using currants or gooseberries will work. They have a stronger flavor than the apple pectin so consider that in the final product. I have come to find that red currants do not overpower the flavor of strawberries like black currants do although I love the flavor of black currants. This year I am saving most of my black currants for making syrup and using it to flavor soda water throughout the year.

Get a hold of some currant or gooseberries. They are high in pectin and will punch up the low pectin quality of strawberries. Both currants and gooseberries are popping up in the market about now. Cook 1 cup of either (or mix them I suppose) with 3 cups water. Bring to a boil and then let simmer 20 - 30 minutes. Drain. Reserve juice. You can put the pulp in a sieve to try and get the remaining goodness from the peels and seeds (which is where a lot of the pectin lives) but it is not necessary.

Now, marinate 2 lbs (6 cups) washed and sliced strawberries or raspberries in 2 cups sugar. That cuts the sugar a lot from traditional recipes..

This is the time to throw in herbs or lemon peel or ginger or whatever you dream up. Marinate overnight in the fridge. Stir one or two times and take out of the fridge for an hour or two before cooking up. It will help render more of the juices. You will get about 6 cups marinated berries the next day from all the juice that was rendered from the berries.

Next morning, remove herbs if you added them. Add 3 T lemon juice and 1 cup of reserved currant or gooseberry juice. Bring to boil in wide pot (important) at least three times the height of your berry mixture so it can boil off. If you don't have a pot wide and tall enough (but not too tall) it will just take longer to come to gel cause the moisture in the berry mixture will take longer to cook down. What I tell students is that, in the end, you are making a syrup that your berries will be suspended in. That is what jam is about. So you need to cook off the moisture in the fruit and then cook down the syrup. That is process and time frame that is generally divided in two - cooking down moisture in fruit the first part (don't stir) and cooking the syrup the second part (stir occasionally at first and then more towards the end to prevent scorching). Sometimes the entire process takes me 15 - 20 minutes (again time split in half for each process) and sometimes longer up to 25 or so. It has everything to do with the moisture in the fruit, the amount of liquid that is rendered, and, by adding currant juice, the added liquid in

the juice. The size of the pan and the temp. under the pan also plays a part. You want it to be as high as you can without making the mixture overflow which it would love to do.

In the end the currant juice lends a lovely flavor to the jam and helps it gel because of the pectin. Actually, I have not used the gooseberries but someone should and report on the matter.

This recipe is not the same as using the pectin I offer on my site but that is cause I figured not too many folks can find early drop or crabapples yet which is what I generally use. I make up a huge batch in late summer and have it when I am making strawberry jam the following spring.

So try currants or gooseberries for the added kick early season berries need. Best of luck and let me know how it goes.