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STRAWBERRY SYRUP

By Monique Wilber

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I am starting to see more strawberries in the markets, so it's time to start thinking about preserving those crimson gems. Did you know that 8 fresh medium berries contain only 50 calories, are high in folate, and provide 160% of your recommended daily Vitamin C? Choose shiny, firm strawberries with a bright red color. Caps should be fresh and green and it's best to avoid shriveled or mushy berries. Do not wash strawberries until you are ready to eat them. Store in the refrigerator for one to three days. Strawberries can be frozen using syrup packs, or sliced or crushed. Either way, don't cook the berries. For sliced or crushed strawberries: wash and remove caps; then slice or crush partially or completely. To 1 quart (1 1/3 pounds) berries add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar; mix thoroughly. Stir until most of the sugar is dissolved or let stand for 15 minutes. Pack into containers, leaving headspace. Seal and freeze.

Strawberry syrup can be used over pancakes and waffles; over French toast and crepes; over shortcake or angel food cake; on ice cream and frozen yogurt; as flavoring for homemade soda or infused waters; in coffee and tea; in homemade ice cream; and in homemade salad dressings.

This recipe for boiling water bath canned syrup includes delicious strawberry chunks, and will be shelf stable after canning. Don't forget to increase canning time for higher altitudes, as indicated in the recipe below. This syrup should be canned in half-pints or pints only, with the following the listed processing times.

Strawberry Syrup

Yield: About 9 half-pints.

Procedure: Select 6½ cups of fresh or frozen fruit of your choice. Wash, cap, and stem fresh fruit and crush in a saucepan. Heat to boiling and simmer until soft (5 to 10 minutes). Strain hot fruit through a colander and drain until cool enough to handle. Strain the collected juice through a double layer of cheesecloth or jelly bag. Discard (compost) the dry pulp. The yield of the pressed juice should be about 4½ to 5 cups. Combine the juice with 6¾ cups of sugar in a large saucepan, bring to boil, and simmer 1 minute. To make a syrup with whole fruit pieces, save 1 or 2 cups of the fresh or frozen fruit, combine these with the sugar, and simmer as in making regular syrup. Remove from heat, skim off foam, and fill into clean half-pint or pint jars, leaving ½-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process according to these recommendations: 10 minutes at altitudes of 0-1,000 feet; 15 minutes at altitudes of 1,001 – 6,000 feet; and 20 minutes at altitudes above 6,000 feet.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506.

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