



GOOSEBERRY JAM

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Gooseberry jam is part of a love/hate relationship in our household. We love the jam, but the delicious berries come at a painful cost through harvesting them around their serious thorns. The fact that we keep going back year after year for more gooseberries is proof enough that the jam is worth the blood offerings.

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups of gooseberries (stemmed and tailed)
1 ¼ cup water
1 lemon, juiced
4 cups sugar

DIRECTIONS:

1. Prepare your canner, jars, lids and rings. Place a couple of small ceramic dishes in the freezer. You will use these to test your jam's doneness later.
2. In a large stock pot or Dutch oven combine half of the berries, lemon juice and water. Bring the pot to a boil and cook the berries for 10 minutes. Some of the berries will start to pop and the liquid will turn garnet red.
3. Add the rest of the berries and the sugar to the pot and stir over gentle heat (about 10-15 minutes) until the sugar dissolves completely. Do not rush this part or the sugar can crystalize (aka bad mojo for jam). Once the sugar grains are all dissolved bring the berries and sugar to a full, hard boil that cannot be stirred down. Stir often for about 10-15 minutes with a long handled wooden spoon to ensure the jam does not stick or burn.
4. To see if the jam has set, remove one of the chilled plates from the freezer and drizzle a little bit of the hot jam mixture onto the plate. Then tilt the plate to let the jam run. If the jam firms up quickly and sort of crinkles on the top, then it is done. If it does not firm up quickly, then let it continue to boil hard for a couple more minutes and test it again. Keep going until you get the crinkles, then you are ready to fill.
5. Once the jam is firming up well, remove it from the heat and skim off any foam. This can be set aside in a bowl to add to a nice piece of toast to celebrate your hard work.
6. Fill and process your jars based on the manufacturer's directions. I like to use wide mouthed 250 ml jars.
7. After the jars are processed, set them aside to cool for 24 hours. Resist the urge to touch or move them during this time. If any lids don't seal properly, simply put those jars into the refrigerator and enjoy over the next couple of days. The sealed jars can be stored for up to one year.
8. After the jars are cooled, clean them off and remove the rings. Label your jars clearly with the name of their contents and the date they were sealed. Store the jars in a single layer in a dark, cool area. Do not stack your jars on top of one another. The reason you remove the rings is that if something went wrong with the canning and bad stuff is growing in there, the lid will lose its seal and pop open. This food should be discarded and not eaten. If you keep the rings on or stack something on top of your jars, then you cannot tell if a seal has popped.