

Bottling/Preserving Fruit

1. To prepare and sterilise the jars, wash the jars thoroughly in very hot water and drain well. Dry them in the oven, heated to 140°C, then turn off the oven and leave the jars in the oven until you are ready to use them. Use ovenproof bottles with an airtight seal – those with a rubber ring and metal spring clip are best.
2. To make the sugar syrup, stir 1 cup (220 g) of sugar and 2 cups (250 ml) water in a saucepan over low heat until the sugar has dissolved completely. Bring to the boil, boil for 1 minute, then remove the pan from the heat. **Note:** A 500 ml jar requires about 350 g of prepared fruit and 1 cup of sugar syrup to cover the fruit.
3. Peel, core and slice apples and pears; skin, halve and stone apricots and peaches; and bottle plums and soft fruits whole. Pack the fruit, as tightly as possible without damaging it, into the clean, sterilised jars. Stand the jars in a heavy roasting pan, lined with several layers of newspaper. Space the jars at least 5cm apart and, to ensure even heating, process only one batch of jars at a time.
4. Bring the sugar syrup to the boil and pour into the filled jars to come within 3cm of the top. With the rubber rings attached, place the lids on the jars, but do not seal with their rings or clips. If using screw-on lids, screw on very lightly so that they are just in position.
5. Put the jars in the oven and cook for the recommended time, according to the type of fruit. The cooking time is dependent on the number of jars being used and on how tightly the fruit is packed. (For four jars of up to 1 litre of soft fruit, allow 35–40 minutes. Allow from 40 minutes to 1 hour for five to ten jars of up to 1.5 litres of soft fruit. Stone and other fruits need 40–50 minutes for up to four jars, and 50 minutes to 1 hour 10 minutes for five or more jars.)
6. Once the minimum time has been reached, check the oven frequently. Wear oven gloves to remove the jars as soon as bubbles are seen rising regularly.
7. Stand the jars on a wooden board – not on a cold surface, as they will crack. Quickly wipe the tops of the jars with a clean, damp cloth to remove any syrup. Immediately tighten the clips, screw on the sealing rings or tighten the screw-on lids. Leave for 2–3 minutes, then tighten again. Leave the jars on the board until cold, preferably overnight.
8. When cold, test the jars to make sure they are vacuum sealed. Undo the clip or ring and carefully lift each jar a little by its lid – if the lid holds, a seal has been formed. Metal lids on screw top jars become concave when a vacuum has been created. Use the contents of any unsealed jars immediately or reprocess them and test for a seal as before. Wipe the outside of the jars with a clean, damp cloth to remove any stickiness, then label, date and store them in a cool, dark, airy cupboard. Check the jars often. If the fruit rises to the top and is no longer covered by the syrup, turn upside-down for a short time, but make sure that they don't leak. Properly sealed, the contents of the jars will keep indefinitely. Once opened, they must be stored in the refrigerator.

Enjoy!! 😊