

APPLE PIE FILLING

Since apple pie is a North American tradition, homemade apple pie filling is a wonderful staple to have on hand.

INGREDIENTS

Makes about 7 quart jars.

6 quarts blanched sliced apples
5½ cups sugar
1½ cups ClearJel® (see note)
1 tbsp cinnamon
1 tsp nutmeg (optional)
2½ cups cold water
5 cups apple juice
¾ cup bottled lemon juice

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Use firm, crisp apples. Stayman, Golden Delicious, Rome and other varieties of similar quality are suitable. If apples lack tartness, use additional ¼ cup of lemon juice for each 6 quarts of sliced apples.
2. **Hot Pack.** Wash, peel and core apples. Cut apples into slices, ½ inch wide. Place in an anti-darkening solution. Remove from anti-darkening solution and drain well.
3. To blanch the fruit, place 6 cups at a time in one gallon of boiling water. Boil each batch for one minute after the water returns to a boil. Remove fruit from blanch water, but keep the hot fruit in a covered bowl or pot while the ClearJel® mixture is prepared.
4. Combine sugar, ClearJel®, cinnamon and nutmeg in a large saucepot with water and apple juice. Stir and cook on medium high heat until mixture thickens and begins to bubble. Add lemon juice to the boiling mixture and boil 1 minute, stirring constantly.
5. Immediately fold in drained apple slices and fill hot jars with hot mixture. Leave 1-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar

rims. Adjust lids and screw on bands. Tighten bands to finger-touch.

6. Place jars in canner, ensuring they are completely covered with water. Bring to a boil and process for 25 minutes. Remove canner lid. Wait 5 minutes, then remove jars, cool and store without lid bands.

NOTE

ClearJel® is a cooking starch that is acceptable for use in home canning. Not all cooking starches are suitable for home canning, as reheating causes some to lose viscosity. Making mixtures too thick can interfere with required heat penetration during heat processing.

REFERENCES

So Easy To Preserve. Sixth Edition. E.L. Andress, J.A. Harrison. 2014.

LOCAL CONTACT

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OOZING PIE FILLING

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the pie filling tends to ooze down the side of the jars after the jars are removed from the canner. We have experimented with several different techniques for trying to ensure that this does not happen. A few tips may make canning pie-filling a success:

- **Follow directions carefully for preparing fruit.** This including thawing frozen fruit and blanching fresh fruit. One goal of home-canning is to remove air from the jars so that the jars will seal. Raw fruit can have a lot of air in the fruit tissue. Blanching will help remove some of this air prior to the canning process, leaving less air to be removed during canning. Blanch fruit in small batches, changing the blanch water frequently. If you use frozen fruit and it's not yet thawed, the quick cooking process prior to canning may not completely thaw the fruit and could interfere with gel formation prior to canning, leaving the gel to form, and the product to thicken, later in the process.
- **Take care to remove air bubbles prior to sealing.** As the filling thickens it can trap air bubbles in the jar. Use your bubble freer to remove those trapped bubbles prior to sealing each jar.
- **Use $\frac{3}{4}$ of the amount of ClearJel recommended in Extension recipes.** ClearJel is a modified corn starch; modified so that it will not break down as the pie filling is cooked in preparation for canning, heated during the canning process, and heated a third time as the pie is baked. So, if the recipe calls for $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of ClearJel, use only $\frac{3}{4}$ of this amount or 1 cup + 2 tablespoons, and so forth. Extension does not recommend the use of regular corn starch or flour for thickening pie filling as these thickeners tend to break down and a poor quality product results.

- **Do not attempt to double recipes.** Because it can be difficult to stir the ClearJel/fruit mixture as it thickens, do not double the recipe but make more batches on any given day.
- **Leave sufficient headspace.** Pie filling recipe recommend canning in quart jars, just enough for one pie! Be sure to leave at least 1" headspace in each jar, and take care to remove air bubbles prior to applying the lid. Leaving even a bit more headspace, up to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch, can help to prevent oozing.
- **Keep the product hot and canner ready to go!** Take care to avoid delays in canning, but if this happens, product waiting for canning should be kept very hot, about 180°F internal temperature, ideally in something like a Nesco roaster in 1-2" of very hot water. Jars should be promptly canned in a boiling water canner or steam canner according to recipe instructions.
- **Try leaving the jars in the canner for 10 minutes after the end of the timed process, especially if using a boiling water canner.** The pressure of the canner water will help to prevent oozing as the jars begin to cool in the canner. Be sure to remove jars after about 10 minutes and before they cool completely. Do not hold the jars if using a steam canner; simply remove jars at the end of the processing time.

Canning pie filling in quart jars, rather than pint jars, may also help. For pint jars, follow the recipe for quart jars, retaining 1" headspace, and using the processing time listed for quart jars. If your pie filling does ooze out the side, the jar lids will be more stuck-on than sealed, so set those jars aside and store them in the refrigerator. Enjoy within 2 weeks.

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