

Preserve Summer: Delicious Chokecherry Jelly from Scratch

Homemade Chokecherry Jelly: Nothing Says Homemade Goodness Quite Like It!



OVEN
220°F

TIME
20 min

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INGREDIENTS

4 cups Chokecherry Juice (from approximately 5-6 lbs Chokecherries)

2 to 6 cups Sugar (granulated, *see note below)

1 medium lemon (juiced, optional, but recommended for brightness and set)

Swaps and Notes:

Chokecherries: These are small, tart berries native to North America. They have a distinct flavor. Do not confuse them with other wild cherries.

Sugar Amount: This is a crucial note! The range of sugar (2 to 6 cups) is wide because the natural pectin content and tartness of chokecherries can vary significantly depending on ripeness and variety. Start with 4 cups and adjust after a gel test. If your juice is particularly tart, you might need more sugar. For a less sweet jelly, use less sugar, but be aware it might not set as firmly without added pectin if you go too low. Lemon juice also helps with the set.

Lemon Juice: The lemon juice not only brightens the flavor but also adds natural pectin, which is essential for proper gelling. Do not omit unless you are very confident in your chokecherry's natural pectin level.

Pectin: This recipe relies on the natural pectin in the chokecherries and lemon. If you find your jelly isn't gelling, you might need to add commercial pectin in future batches, following its package directions for fruit-specific jellies.

Jam Pot: Use a wide, heavy-bottomed pot or a Dutch oven for making jelly. This allows for quick evaporation and prevents scorching.

Directions:

Extract Chokecherry Juice: Start by giving your chokecherries a good wash and removing the stems.

To extract the juice, you have a couple of methods:

Steam Juicer Method: Follow your steam juicer's instructions. This is the easiest and yields the clearest juice.

Simmering Method: Place the washed chokecherries in a large pot with 1 cup of water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally and crushing the berries with a potato masher to release their juices.

Strain: Once simmered, strain the mixture through a jelly bag (or several layers of cheesecloth in a colander) suspended over a large bowl. Let it sit for at least 2 hours (or even overnight) to collect all that aromatic juice. Do not squeeze the bag, or your jelly may be cloudy.

Measure Juice: Now, carefully measure out exactly 4 cups of the prepared chokecherry juice and pour it into a clean jam pot or large, heavy-bottomed saucepan.

Add Lemon & Sugar: If you like a bit of tang, add in the lemon juice (from 1 medium lemon) along with your sugar. This is the flexible part: use anywhere from 2 to 6 cups of granulated sugar depending on how sweet you want your jelly to be and the tartness of your berries. Start with 4 cups and plan to adjust. Stir to dissolve the sugar.

Boil Rapidly: Heat your mixture on high heat and bring it to a full, rolling boil, stirring frequently to prevent burning or overflow. A "rolling boil" means it continues to boil even when stirred.

Cook to Gel Stage: Cook this bubbly delight on medium-high heat, maintaining a rapid boil, until it reaches the gel stage, which should take about 15-20 minutes. You can test for gelling in a few ways: **Thermometer Method:** Use an instant-read thermometer to check for 220°F (104°C). This is a reliable indicator.

Cold Plate Method: Place a few small plates in the freezer before you start. When you think the jelly is ready, spoon a small amount onto a chilled plate, let it cool for 30 seconds, then push it with your finger. If it wrinkles, it's ready!

Fill Jars: Carefully pour the hot, beautiful chokecherry jelly into prepared, hot canning jars, ensuring you leave about a ... inch headspace (space between the jelly and the rim of the jar). Wipe the rims clean with a damp cloth.

Seal & Process (or Refrigerate): Cap the jars with 2-part canning lids (flats and rings), tightening

to fingertip-tight. For Immediate Enjoyment: You can simply let them cool on the counter, then store them in the fridge.

For Longer Shelf Life (Water Bath Canning): Place the filled jars into a water bath canner, ensuring they are covered by at least 1 inch of water. Bring the water to a rolling boil and process (boil) for 10 minutes. Once done, turn off the heat, remove the canner lid, and let the jars sit in the hot water for an additional 5 minutes before carefully removing them to cool to room temperature on a wire rack without disturbing them.

Check Seals & Store: After 24 hours, check the seals on your jars by pressing the center of the lid. If it doesn't flex, it's sealed. Any that aren't sealed should go in the fridge for immediate use. Properly sealed jars can hang out in your pantry for 12 to 18 months. Just remember to refrigerate after opening and enjoy within a few weeks!

Tips for Success:

Patience with Juice: Don't squeeze the jelly bag! Let gravity do the work for clear jelly.

Sugar Adjustment: Be mindful of the sugar quantity. Chokecherries are quite tart, so you'll likely need a good amount of sugar to balance.

Rolling Boil: Maintain a true rolling boil throughout the cooking process to activate pectin and evaporate moisture.

Gel Test: Always test for the gel stage. It's the most important step for achieving a perfect set.

Hot Jars, Hot Jelly: Pouring hot jelly into hot jars helps prevent thermal shock and ensures a good seal if canning.

Headspace: Leave the correct headspace to allow for proper sealing.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings:

Breakfast Classics: Spread it generously on toast, biscuits, muffins (like my These Easy Pumpkin Spice Muffins Are My Favorite Fall Treat to Bake on Repeat), scones, or pancakes.

Baking: Use it as a filling for thumbprint cookies, tarts, or as a glaze for cakes.

Savory Pairings: Surprisingly good with roasted meats (especially game), or on a cheese board with strong cheeses.

Beverages: Stir a spoonful into hot tea for a fruity twist, or create a refreshing drink with it, similar to my This Blueberry Lemonade Is My Favorite Refreshing Drink for Sunny Days.

Storage and Leftover Tips:

DIRECTIONS

1. Making chokecherry jelly involves a few key stages: juice extraction, cooking, and testing for the set.
2. **Extract : Chokecherry Juice:** Start by giving your chokecherries a good wash and removing the stems. To extract the juice, you have a couple of methods: **Steam Juicer Method:** Follow your steam juicer's instructions. This is the easiest and yields the clearest juice.
3. **Simmering : Method:** Place the washed chokecherries in a large pot with 1 cup of water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally and crushing the berries with a potato masher to release their juices.
4. **Strain:** Once simmered, strain the mixture through a jelly bag (or several layers of cheesecloth in a colander) suspended over a large bowl. Let it sit for at least 2 hours (or even overnight) to collect all that aromatic juice. Do not squeeze the bag, or your jelly may be cloudy.
5. **Measure : Juice:** Now, carefully measure out exactly 4 cups of the prepared chokecherry juice and pour it into a clean jam pot or large, heavy-bottomed saucepan.
6. **Add : Lemon & Sugar:** If you like a bit of tang, add in the lemon juice (from 1 medium lemon) along with your sugar. This is the flexible part: use anywhere from 2 to 6 cups of granulated sugar depending on how sweet you want your jelly to be and the tartness of your berries. Start with 4 cups and plan to adjust. Stir to dissolve the sugar.
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to prevent burning or overflow. A "rolling boil" means it continues to boil even when stirred.

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10. **Fill : Jars:** Carefully pour the hot, beautiful chokecherry jelly into prepared, hot canning jars, ensuring you leave about a ... inch headspace (space between the jelly and the rim of the jar). Wipe the rims clean with a damp cloth.
11. **Seal & : Process (or Refrigerate):** Cap the jars with 2-part canning lids (flats and rings), tightening to fingertip-tight. For Immediate Enjoyment: You can simply let them cool on the counter, then store them in the fridge.
12. **For : Longer Shelf Life (Water Bath Canning):** Place the filled jars into a water bath canner, ensuring they are covered by at least 1 inch of water. Bring the water to a rolling boil and process (boil) for 10 minutes. Once done, turn off the heat, remove the canner lid, and let the jars sit in the hot water for an additional 5 minutes before carefully removing them to cool to room temperature on a wire rack without disturbing them.
13. **Check : Seals & Store:** After 24 hours, check the seals on your jars by pressing the center of the lid. If it doesn't flex, it's sealed. Any that aren't sealed should go in the fridge for immediate use. Properly sealed jars can hang out in your pantry for 12 to 18 months. Just remember to refrigerate after opening and enjoy within a few weeks!
14. **Tips for Success: Patience with Juice:** Don't squeeze the jelly bag! Let gravity do the work for clear jelly.
15. **Sugar : Adjustment:** Be mindful of the sugar quantity. Chokecherries are quite tart, so you'll likely need a good amount of sugar to balance.
16. **Rolling : Boil:** Maintain a true rolling boil throughout the cooking process to activate pectin and evaporate moisture.
17. **Gel : Test:** Always test for the gel stage. It's the most important step for achieving a perfect set.
18. **Hot : Jars, Hot Jelly:** Pouring hot jelly into hot jars helps prevent thermal shock and ensures a good seal if canning.
19. **Headspace:** Leave the correct headspace to allow for proper sealing.
20. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** This Homemade Chokecherry Jelly is a versatile sweet spread that brightens any meal:

21. **Breakfast : Classics:** Spread it generously on toast, biscuits, muffins (like my These Easy Pumpkin Spice Muffins Are My Favorite Fall Treat to Bake on Repeat), scones, or pancakes.
22. **Baking:** Use it as a filling for thumbprint cookies, tarts, or as a glaze for cakes.
23. **Savory : Pairings:** Surprisingly good with roasted meats (especially game), or on a cheese board with strong cheeses.
24. **Beverages:** Stir a spoonful into hot tea for a fruity twist, or create a refreshing drink with it, similar to my This Blueberry Lemonade Is My Favorite Refreshing Drink for Sunny Days.
25. **Storage and Leftover Tips:** As noted in the directions, properly water-bath canned jars can be stored in a cool, dark pantry for 12-18 months. Once opened, refrigerate and consume within a few weeks. Unsealed jars from the initial process should also be refrigerated and used within a few weeks.

SWAPS & NOTES

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS

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Let gravity do the work for clear jelly.

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More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/preserve-summer-delicious-chokecherry-jelly-from-scratch/>