

No-Sugar-Added Jams and Jellies

Basic Facts about Regular pectins

1. Regular pectin, in fruit naturally or from a commercial product such as SureJel®, Certo®, Mrs. Wages Home Jel® or Ball Pectin®, MUST have a certain amount of sugar and acid to gel or set. Commercial pectin is made by extracting it from fruit, usually either apple pomace or orange/citrus peels.
2. You can get that amount of sugar either by cooking down the fruit or adding sugar. Cooking the fruit long enough concentrates the sugar by evaporating water. It usually darkens the fruit and can result in a cooked flavor. It also gives a reduced yield, that is, you won't get as many jars of jam or preserves from the same amount of fruit as you would if you directly added the sugar.
3. Either way they are made, sweet preserves made with regular pectin will all have the same calories and the same amount of sugar when they gel.

No-sugar or less-sugar pectins

1. There are 2 kinds of pectin that need less sugar.

A. SureJel® No-Sugar Needed, Mrs. Wages Light Home Jel® and Ball Pectin® No-Sugar Needed have been especially purified from regular pectin. They will gel with no or little added sugar. They still require the added acid (lemon juice) for most fruits. You must follow the directions on the package insert or recipes from their websites. Recipes for the no-sugar needed products are not necessarily interchangeable with recipes for regular pectin.

B. Pomona's Universal Pectin is another specially purified pectin that does not need sugar but it does need calcium to gel. The packets of this product contain two pouches, one of pectin and one of calcium. The calcium is dissolved in water and a certain amount of calcium water is added to each recipe. This product is very similar to the products used commercially to make no-sugar-added jams and jellies.

It can be purchased on-line from <http://www.pomonapectin.com>. There are recipes and directions on line at the same website.

No-Sugar Products and Storage

1. There are some questions as to how long a no-sugar jam or jelly can be safely stored. Sugar is the preservative in regular jams, jellies and sweet preserves. Without the sugar the chances of spoilage are higher. If mold, bubbles, an acid-y or fermented odor or other signs of spoilage are noticed, discard the whole jar of product. Do not try to just scrape off a spot of mold. Toxins produced by the mold could be dissolved throughout the jar.

2. Sugar is also the preservative that maintains color. Jams and sweet preserves made without sugar will darken and lose their color much more rapidly than those made with sugar. For top quality sugar-free products you might consider freezing fruit without sugar, then making the sugar-free jam or jelly in small batches throughout the year as you need it.