



COOKS ON MAIN

for the everyday chef

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Peach Jam with Sriracha
Makes 3 (half-pint/250 ml) jars

When peaches are in season, I have a hard time holding back and end up buying vast quantities of them. It's always far more than I can eat before they soften precariously and so I'm always devising new ways to put them into jars. A few years back, while cooking up a little batch of peach jam, my eyes fell on the bottle of sriracha sitting on the counter. On a whim, I squirted some into the nearly finished jam, just to see what would happen. The result was a sweet, tart, and slightly spicy jam that is a revelation with turkey burgers and roasted sweet potatoes.

1 dry quart peaches (about 2 pounds/910 g)
1 cup/200 g granulated sugar
1/4 cup/60 ml sriracha
Juice of 1/2 lemon

Prepare a boiling water bath and 3 half-pint/250 ml jars according to the process [see below]. Place 3 lids in a small saucepan of water and bring to a gentle simmer.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. While it heats, cut the peaches in half and remove the pits. Fill a large bowl two-thirds of the way up with cold water. Blanch the peaches in the boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes, then immediately transfer to the ice water.

Once they are cool enough to touch, slip off the skins and halve and pit the peaches. Place the peaches in a shallow bowl or baking dish. Using a potato masher, smash them into a pulp. Stir in the sugar and let the fruit sit for a few minutes, until the sugar is mostly dissolved.

To cook, scrape the fruit into a large skillet, add the lemon juice, and place over medium-high heat. Stirring regularly, bring the fruit to a boil and cook until it bubbles and looks quite thick, 10 to 12 minutes. It's done when you pull a spatula through the jam and it doesn't immediately rush in to fill the space you've cleared. In the last couple of minutes of cooking, stir in the sriracha.

Remove the jam from the heat and funnel into the prepared jars, leaving 1/2-inch/12 mm of headspace. Wipe the rims, apply the lids and rings, and process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes [see below].

How to Process

1. If you're starting with brand-new jars, remove their lids and rings. If you're using older jars, check the rims to make sure there are no chips or cracks.

Continued on Page 2



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Page 2, continued

2. Put the rack into the canning pot and put the jars on top.
3. Fill the pot (and jars) with water to cover and bring to a boil. I have found that this is the very easiest way to heat up the jars in preparation for canning because you're going to have to heat up the canning pot anyway. Why not use that energy to heat up the jars as well?
4. Put the lids in a small saucepan, cover with water, and bring them to the barest simmer on the back of the stove.
5. While the canning pot comes to a boil, prepare your product.
6. When your recipe is complete, remove the jars from the canning pot (pouring the water back into the pot as you remove the jars) and set them on a clean towel on the counter. There's no need to invert them; the jars will be so hot that any remaining water will rapidly evaporate. Remove the lids from the saucepan with tongs or a magnetic lid wand and lay them out on the clean towel.
7. Carefully fill the jars with your product. Depending on the recipe, you'll need to leave between 1/4 and 1/2 inch/ 6 and 12 mm of headspace (that's the room between the surface of the product and the top of the jar). Jams and jellies typically get 1/4 inch/6 mm, while thicker products and pickles get 1/2 inch/12 mm.
8. Wipe the rims of the jar with a clean, damp paper towel or kitchen towel. If the product you're working with is very sticky, you can dip the edge of the cloth in distilled white vinegar for a bit of a cleaning boost.
9. Apply the lids and screw the bands on the jars to hold the lids down during processing. Tighten the bands with the tips of your fingers to ensure that they aren't overly tight. This is known as "fingertip tight."
10. Carefully lower the filled jars into the canning pot. You may need to remove some water as you put the jars in the pot, to keep it from overflowing. A heat-resistant measuring cup is the best tool for this job. If you're canning in an asparagus or 4th burner pot, you will be stacking your jars. Take care as you do this.
11. Once the pot has returned to a rolling boil, start your timer. The length of the processing time will vary from recipe to recipe.
12. When your timer goes off, promptly remove the jars from the water bath. Gently place them back on the towel-lined countertop and let them cool.

Continued on Page 3



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Page 3, continued

13. The jar lids should begin to ping soon after they've been removed from the pot. The pinging is the sound of the seals forming; the center of the lids will become concave as the vacuum seal takes hold.

14. After the jars have cooled for 24 hours, remove the bands and check the seals. You do this by grasping the jar by the edges of the lid and gently lifting it an inch /2.5 cm or two off the countertop. The lid should hold fast.

15. Once you've determined that your seals are good, you can store your jars in a cool, dark place (with the rings off, please) for up to a year. Any jars with the bad seals can still be used – just store them in the refrigerator and use within 2 weeks.