

Blueberry Preserves

10 cups of fresh blueberries
6 cups of granulated sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons of lemon zest
1/3 cup fresh lemon juice



Because this is a canned preserve, it is important to make sure your jars and lids are sterilized. So, to begin, fill a large stockpot half full of water [you are going to want the water to be over the tops of your jars by a couple inches, so make sure you have enough water in there for that] and set over a medium burner. Carefully put in the jars and lids. Once this comes up to a boil, cover and turn off heat. You are going to turn it back on high for about the last 10 minutes of the preserve cooking time, to sterilize the jars and have the water hot enough to can the final product.

Wash blueberries and pick over, removing any debris and spoiled berries. Place about half of the berries in a different pot – about 5 to 8 quart size will do. Crush well with a potato masher. Stir in the other half of the berries. Add the sugar, salt and lemon zest. Stir well and place over a burner set to low. Stir every minute or two.

Place a small plate in the freezer – this will be to test the doneness of the preserves. You want to bring the berries and sugar up to a gentle simmer. They will need to be stirred frequently, and more so as time goes by. Cook about 20 minutes, and test a small amount on the cold plate you put in the freezer. After sitting on the plate for a minute or so, the preserves should look pretty thick, and should not run very freely if you tip the plate. If the mixture is still too thin, keep cooking, and check again every 5 minutes or so, returning the plate to the freezer after each check. How long it takes is going to depend largely on the moisture content of the berries you are using. This batch took about 30 minutes total. Stir in lemon juice and cook another 5 minutes or so.

When the preserves are thickened enough, carefully remove the jars from the boiling water in the large pot, and set upright on a towel on your work surface. Carefully ladle the preserves into the jars – the big funnel helps keep the edges of the jars clean. Jams don't need very much headspace above the surface of the jam itself – about ¼ inch is enough room. Any more than that leaves too much chance for bacteria to grow, so fill them right up to that level. Wipe the edges of the jars with a damp cloth, and put on the lids and rings. [the magnet thing in the set of canning tools is very handy for fishing those lids out of the boiling water – or use tongs] Don't screw the rings down super tight – just until they resist a bit is fine. If you have less than enough for the final jar, just put that one in the fridge to eat up first. I got about 9 and half jelly jars, which each hold ½ pint.

You can place a folded kitchen towel in the bottom of the pan, or use a rack from an old canner. This protects the bottom of the jars because they will jitter around on the bottom otherwise. Just lay the towel on top of the water in the pan, and push it down to the bottom with a long handled spoon – be careful not to splash the hot water on yourself. Carefully place the jars back in the large pot of water. Once the water is back up to a full boil, set the timer for 10 minutes. When the time is up, carefully remove the jars to a wooden cutting board, or a dry towel on the counter. You will probably start to hear the lids popping pretty quickly. Cool completely and check to make sure all of the centers of the lids have popped down. Refrigerate any jars with a dome still on the lid, and eat up first. When the jars are fully cool, you can remove the rings if you like. Store in a fairly cool spot, and when opening the jars, inspect the contents, discarding any jars with mold or questionable appearance. Preserves will keep very well for up a year, or even longer, though the quality may suffer somewhat after a year.