



## In a jam? What to do with all of those berries



Jam or jelly always seems to be the go-to for berries and can make great birthday and holiday gifts. But sometimes you want something different in the pantry or the freezer.

You can freeze strawberries, blackberries, or just about any kind of berry using a method called “individually quick frozen” or IQF. Select fully ripe, firm berries. Wash them carefully in cold water, and discard any soft, under ripe or defective fruit. If freezing strawberries, remove the stem. Dry well on paper towels. Place on a cookie sheet and freeze. Once frozen remove berries from the tray and seal in freezer safe bags or containers. If you use bags, stack them flat in the freezer to maximize your freezer space. These berries can then be used for future baking, smoothies, desserts, over ice cream, just about anything. And because you used the IQF freezing method, you can use the entire container or just a small amount, it’s your choice.

When it comes to drying, berries usually do not dehydrate well but are great for fruit leather. Select ripe or slightly overripe fruit. Wash in cool water removing any under ripe or defective berries. Puree in blender or food processor. Use a liner designed for fruit leathers in your dehydrator or line the trays with parchment paper or plastic wrap. Spread puree evenly, about 1/8-inch-thick onto drying tray. Dry at 140 degrees for 6 to 8 hours. Leather dries from the outside edge-in. Test for dryness by touching center; no indentation should be evident.

Of course, there are also several ways to make jams. They can be made with or without pectin, low sugar, and even quick freezer jam.

If you are interested in learning all about berries and how to preserve your harvest, please join the UCCE Master Food Preservers on May 18, 10:00 to 12:00 in the auditorium at 2156 Sierra Way, San Luis Obispo. Registration is required and you can sign up at <http://ucanr.edu/berriesandbliss>. Class fee is \$10.

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