



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

# Family Matters

*Improving Health Together*

## December 2022 Newsletter

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### Holiday Food Traditions

*By Michael Lucero, Family and Consumer Science Instructor, El Paso County*

The holidays are a great time for family traditions. When I was a child, one tradition we had every year was making tamales. My mom, aunts, and cousins would get together and make tamales that would last the whole holiday season. Now, I continue this tradition with my two daughters every year. Looking back at the traditions I had as a young child gives me a sense of accomplishment, belonging and happiness, and I wanted to bring that same experience to my children. In addition to making tamales every year, we started the tradition of making holiday jams for ourselves and as gifts for family and friends. This has been a great tradition for my family, and I encourage you, too, to start a family holiday tradition. If you haven't got one already, consider something as easy as a holiday jam.



#### Tips for making no-cook/freezer jams:

- Use fully ripened fruits. This will give your jam the best flavor.
- Use fruits at room temperature. This will help to dissolve the ingredients more easily.
- Use a reduced sugar freezer pectin when making lower sugar freezer jam
- Use 1-2 cup glass or rigid plastic freezer containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Leave at least 1/2 inch of space from the top of the jam to the lid to allow for expansion of the jam as it freezes.
- Follow directions for preparation. In some recipes, the jam must be allowed to stand at room temperature for 24 hours; others can be frozen right after the jam is made.

#### Food safety tips when preparing freezer jams:

- Always wash your hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds before you start making your jams.
- Rinse your fruit thoroughly under running water.
- Make sure all your utensils and bowls have been washed and are clean.
- Wash the containers for jam in hot soapy water or run through the dishwasher.
- Ensure your preparation area is clean.
- After opening the jam, store in the refrigerator. Remember, the product is not cooked, so it will ferment and mold quickly if left at room temperature for extended periods of time.

*Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...*

## Let's Talk



Jams generally have a high amount of sugar in them and thus may be considered less healthy. Most jams are prepared this way so they can be stored on the shelf, not requiring refrigeration before they are opened. However, the great thing about freezer jam is that because it is stored in the freezer, it can take less sugar. This provides a healthier alternative to traditionally canned/jarred jams.

Pectin is an ingredient in all jams that allow the jam to gel and become spreadable. There are different types of pectin in the stores and can easily be found. If you want to reduce the amount of sugar in your jam, it is recommended to use a reduced sugar, freezer jam pectin. There are many different brands. Some of these brands include *Sure-Jell*, *Ball Real Fruit Pectin*, *Mrs. Wages* or any store brand. Any of these brands of pectin will work, but you want to be sure to purchase pectin that is both a no-cook/freezer pectin and a reduced sugar pectin.

Reducing added sugars in our diets is an important part of keeping our families healthy. Sometimes families may think they have to stay away from certain foods. But as you can see, just by changing some of the ingredients in our jam preparation and in other recipes that you may prepare for your family, you can make a healthier version and one that you and your family can enjoy in moderation.

### Recipe for Health Holiday Blueberry Spiced Freezer Jam

Makes 4 (1-cup or half-pint size containers)

#### Ingredients:

- 3½ cups crushed blueberries with stems removed
- 1½ cups sweetener (granulated sugar or Splenda®)
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg or cinnamon
- 4 tablespoons Ball® RealFruit Freezer Pectin or other freezer pectin.



#### Directions:

1. Stir sugar, nutmeg or cinnamon, and pectin together in a bowl.
2. Add crushed fruit. Stir the mixture together for 3 minutes
3. Ladle jam into clean freezer jars and let sit for 30 minutes.
4. Enjoy now or freeze for later use.
5. Keep the product in the refrigerator between uses.
6. When ready to use the frozen jam, allow it to thaw before serving.

Freezer Jam: Can be stored in the freezer for one year. Freezer jam should be stored no longer than 3 weeks in the refrigerator.

***After the Jam is made and the kitchen cleaned, put on some lively tunes and "JAM" to the music. It's always a good time to get in a little physical activity while having family fun!***