



Using, Storing and Preserving



Blueberries

Michigan-grown blueberries are available during July and August.

Prepared by:

Laurie Messing
MSU Extension Educator

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Food Safety and Storage

- Pick or purchase blueberries that are not bruised or damaged.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Wash blueberries under cool running water. Do not use soap.
- Do not wash blueberries before freezing when using a dry or unsweetened type of packing.
- Keep blueberries away from raw meat and meat juices to prevent cross-contamination.
- For best quality and to preserve nutrients, preserve no more than your family can consume in one year.

Yield

¾ pound	=	2 cups fresh, 1 pint frozen
10-pound carton	=	26 cups
13 pints frozen	=	a canner load of 9 pints
12 pounds	=	a canner load of 7 quarts

How to Preserve

Canning

Choose ripe, sweet berries with uniform color. Wash 1 or 2 quarts of berries at a time. Drain and stem, if necessary. Prepare and boil preferred syrup, if desired. Add ½ cup syrup, juice or water to each clean jar.

Preparing and using syrup

Adding syrup to canned fruit helps to retain its flavor, color and shape. It does not prevent spoilage. The guidelines for preparing and using syrups offer a “very light” syrup, which approximates the natural sugar content of many fruits.

Heat water and sugar together, stirring to dissolve sugar. Bring to a boil and pour hot syrup over raw fruits in hot jars. For hot packs, bring water and sugar to boil, add fruit, reheat to boil, and fill hot jars immediately.

Lawn or garden questions?

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Preparing and Using Syrups

Syrup type	Approx. % sugar	Measures of water and sugar				Fruits commonly packed in syrup (2)
		For 9-pt load (1)		For 7-qt load		
		Cups water	Cups sugar	Cups water	Cups sugar	
Very light	10	6½	¾	10½	1¼	Approximates natural sugar levels in most fruits and adds the fewest calories.
Light	20	5¾	1½	9	2¼	Very sweet fruit. Try a small amount the first time to see if your family likes it.
Medium	30	5¼	2¼	8¼	3¾	Sweet apples, sweet cherries, berries, grapes.
Heavy	40	5	3¼	7¾	5¼	Tart apples, apricots, sour cherries, gooseberries, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums.
Very heavy	50	4¼	4¼	6½	6¾	Very sour fruit. Try a small amount the first time to see if your family likes it.

(1) This amount is also adequate for a 4-quart load.

(2) Many fruits that are typically packed in heavy syrup are excellent and tasteful products when packed in lighter syrups.

The USDA recommends that lighter syrups be tried, since they contain fewer calories from added sugar.

This table is adapted from “Table 1. Preparing and Using Syrups” from *Selecting, Preparing and Canning Fruit* on the National Center for Home Food Preservation website at https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_02/syrups.html. That table was adapted from the USDA’s *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539). Revised 2015.

Hot pack – Heat berries in boiling water for 30 seconds and drain. Fill hot jars and cover with hot liquid, leaving ½-inch headspace.

Raw pack – Fill hot jars with raw berries, shaking down gently while filling. Cover with hot syrup, juice or water, leaving ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles; adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with clean paper towel, adjust lids and process according to guidelines in the following tables.

Recommended process time **blueberries (in minutes)**, whole, in a boiling-water canner at various altitudes.

Style of pack	Jar size	0 – 1,000 ft	1,001– 3,000 ft.	3,001– 6,000 ft.	Over 6,000 ft.
Hot	Pints or quarts	15	20	20	25
Raw	Pints	15	20	20	25
	Quarts	20	25	30	35

Recommended process time **blueberries (in minutes)**, in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (minutes)	0 – 2,000 ft	2,001– 4,000 ft.	4,001– 6,000 ft.	6,001– 8,000 ft.
Hot	Pints or quarts	8	6	7	8	9
Raw	Pints	8	6	7	8	9
	Quarts	10	6	7	8	9

Find out more about Michigan Fresh at canr.msu.edu/mi_fresh/.

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Recommended process time **blueberries (in minutes)**, in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (min)	0 – 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot	Pints or quarts	8	5	10
Raw	Pints	8	5	10
	Quarts	10	5	10

Let jars stand undisturbed on the counter for 12 to 24 hours, remove rings, check to make sure lids are sealed, wash jars, label, date and store. Food in jars that do not seal must be reprocessed in a clean jar with a new lid within 24 hours, refrigerated or frozen.

Freezing

- Select full-flavored, ripe berries. Remove leaves, stems, and immature or defective berries. Do not wash blueberries before freezing when using a dry or unsweetened type of packing.

Syrup pack – Syrup pack is preferred for berries for cooking. Pack berries into freezer containers or bags and cover with cold 50-percent syrup (1 cup water to 1 cup sugar), leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Dry pack – Do not wash blueberries before freezing — washing results in a tougher skinned product. Pack

berries into containers, leaving ½- to 1½-inch headspace dependent on container type. Berries can also be frozen first on a tray and then packed into containers as soon as they are frozen. Seal, label, date and freeze. Wash before using.

Crushed or puréed – Wash the blueberries. Crush, press berries through a fine sieve, or purée in a blender or food processor. Mix 1 to 1½ cups of sugar with each quart (2 pounds) of crushed berries or purée. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Pack into containers, leaving ½- to 1½-inch headspace dependent on container type. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Syrups for Use in Freezing Fruits

Type of syrup	Percent syrup*	Cups of sugar **	Cups of water	Yield of syrup in cups
Very light	10%	½	4	4½ cups
Light	20%	1	4	4¾ cups
Medium	30%	1¾	4	5 cups
Heavy	40%	2¾	4	5½ cups
Very heavy	50%	4	4	6 cups

*Approximate

**In general, up to one-fourth of the sugar may be replaced by corn syrup or mild-flavored honey. A larger proportion of corn syrup may be used if a very bland, light-colored type is selected.

References

- Andress, E., & Harrison, J. A. (2014). *So easy to preserve* (Bulletin 989). (6th ed.). University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.
- Blueberries*. (2006). (Food Preservation Series). Michigan State University Extension.

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