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PEACHES

A great many varieties of peaches are grown in Virginia. These varieties fall into two general types: freestone (flesh readily separates from the pit) and clingstone (flesh clings tightly to the pit).

Select peaches which are fairly firm or becoming a trifle soft. The skin color between the red areas should be yellow or creamy.

Avoid very firm or hard peaches with a distinctly green ground color as they are immature and probably will not ripen satisfactorily. Also avoid overripe peaches and those with large bruises or signs of decay. Decay starts as a pale tan spot which expands in a circle.

A bushel of peaches weighs about 48 pounds and will yield about 18 quarts of canned or frozen peaches.

CANNING PEACHES

Wash peaches and remove skins. Dipping each peach in boiling water, then in cold water makes peeling easier. Cut peaches in halves; remove pits. Slice if desired. To prevent fruit from darkening, use crystalline ascorbic acid or a powdered ascorbic acid mixture. Follow package directions regarding use. An older but less effective method of preventing darkening is to drop peach halves or slices into water containing 2 tablespoons each of salt and vinegar per gallon of water. The peaches treated in this way must be drained before packing.

Use a thin, medium, or heavy sirup to suit the sweetness of the fruit and family preference. A thin sirup (30-percent) is made with 2 cups sugar and 4 cups water or juice. Use 3 cups of sugar for a medium sirup (40-percent) and 4 3/4 cups sugar for a heavy sirup (50-percent). Sugar improves the flavor and texture of canned peaches but can be omitted.

RAW PACK Pack raw peaches in jars. Cover with boiling sirup, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles by running spatula or knife between jar and food. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water bath canner (212° F.).

Pint jars 25 minutes

Quart jars 30 minutes

HOT PACK Heat peaches in sirup. Pack hot peaches in jars. Cover with boiling sirup, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles by running spatula or knife between jar and food. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water bath canner (212° F.).

Pint jars 20 minutes

Quart jars 25 minutes

MF-132 Canning and Freezing - General Information has information about processing in a boiling water bath canner.

FREEZING PEACHES

Wash peaches and remove skins and pits. It is better not to use a boiling water dip when peeling peaches to be frozen. Slice if desired.

Sirup pack. Drop peaches into cold 40-percent sirup to which ascorbic acid

has been added to prevent darkening of peaches. Pack peaches into containers. Add sirup to cover. Place a piece of crumpled waxed paper on top of the peaches to hold them under the sirup. Leave 1/2 to 1 1/2-inches headspace-- the smaller amount for wide topped pint containers; the larger amount for narrow topped quart containers. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

Sugar pack. Add 2/3 cup sugar and 1/4 teaspoon crystalline ascorbic acid dissolved in 1/4 cup cold water to each quart of prepared fruit. Mix well. Pack into containers leaving headspace as in sirup pack. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

Unsweetened pack. Pack peaches into containers and cover with cold water containing ascorbic acid. Leave headspace as in sirup pack. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

PEACH JAM

Peaches do not have enough pectin or acid for jelly and jam making. Pectin and acid may be added as in the recipes which follow or peaches may be combined with other fruits which have more pectin and acid.

PEACH JAM with liquid pectin

Yield: 4 pints

4 1/4 cups crushed peaches (about	7 cups sugar
3 1/2 pounds fresh peaches)	1/2 bottle liquid pectin
1/4 cup lemon juice	

Select fully ripe peaches. Wash, peel and remove pits. Crush peaches and measure into a large kettle. Add lemon juice and sugar and stir well. Place on high heat and, stirring constantly, bring quickly to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Remove from heat and stir in pectin. Skim off foam. Pour hot jam into hot sterile jars leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims clean, place metal lids on jars, screw metal bands down firmly, and stand jars upright to cool.

PEACH JAM with powdered pectin

Yield: 3 pints

3 3/4 cups crushed peaches (about 3	1 package powdered pectin
pounds fresh peaches)	5 cups sugar
1/4 cup lemon juice	

Select fully ripe peaches. Wash, peel and remove pits. Crush peaches and measure into a large kettle. Add the lemon juice and pectin and stir well. Place on high heat and, stirring constantly, bring quickly to a full rolling boil.

Add the sugar, continue stirring, and bring again to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Remove from heat. Skim off foam. Pour hot jam into hot sterile jars leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims clean, place metal lids on jars, screw metal bands down firmly, and stand jars upright to cool.

Information adapted from USDA Home and Garden Bulletins by Jo Anne Barton, Extension Specialist, Foods and Nutrition.

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