

Strawberries

are ripe again

STRAWBERRIES are perhaps the most delicious of all the soft fruits of summer. Though the simplest and probably the most enjoyable way to eat them is to pick them, sun warmed and juicy, straight from the plant, there are many other delightful ways of serving them, some of which are described in this article by Eva Topping, Rural Sociologist, Department of Agriculture, Auckland.

WHERE strawberries are plentiful the fragrant smell of hot strawberry jam will pervade the kitchen, and perhaps a few can be spared to bottle in small jars.

Strawberry Jam

Strawberries are among the fruits which do not set readily in jam making, and the addition of some acid and pectin is required when only strawberries are used. By combining them with apple, rhubarb, plum, gooseberry, or lemon juice, a good setting jam will be obtained. Strawberry jam is much better made in comparatively-small quantities, perhaps 2 or 3lb. of fruit in a boiling.

The first recipe gives a jam with a good proportion of whole strawberries in it. Though rhubarb juice is specified, plums, apples, or gooseberries can be used instead. For making the juice boil the apples and cut them in pieces with skins and cores included.

Recipe 1

2lb. of rhubarb 2 cups of water
2lb. of strawberries About 3½ cups of sugar

Wash the rhubarb, cut it into 1in. pieces, add the water, and boil the rhubarb until it is pulpy. Strain it, measure the juice, and allow the same quantity of sugar. (There should be at least 2 cups of juice; if there is less, make it up to 2 cups with water.) Put the measured sugar, rhubarb juice, and another 1½lb. of sugar into a preserving pan and stir it over a gentle heat until the sugar is dissolved and the juice is almost boiling. Then add the strawberries and boil the jam rapidly, stirring as little as possible to keep the strawberries whole. Skim off the

scum, test for setting, and when setting point is reached remove the pan from the stove. Take off any scum and leave the jam to cool, stirring or shaking the pan gently occasionally to prevent the strawberries floating when the jam is in the jars. Pour the jam into clean pots, leave them until they are quite cold, pour on melted wax, and cover, label, and store them.

Recipe 2

3lb. of strawberries Juice of 3 lemons
3lb. of sugar

Wash and stem the strawberries, put the sugar over them, and leave them to stand for 2 or 3 hours, or overnight if convenient. Pour them into a preserving pan, add the lemon juice, and heat them slowly to boiling point, stirring gently until the sugar is dissolved. Boil the jam rapidly until it sets when tested (from 15 to 25 minutes). Put it up and cover it when it is cold.

If the jam is covered with paraffin wax, there should be a small space between the top of the wax and the cover.

Bottled Strawberries

A few small jars of preserved strawberries are a splendid addition to the store cupboard. They can be used for special-occasion cakes, fruit salads, or other desserts. Pint-sized preserving jars are practically unobtainable at present, but 1lb. jam jars sealed with preserving skin are convenient containers. If the first recipe and method are used, the berries remain whole and are less likely to float to the tops of the jars. Unfortunately, strawberries often lose some colour in the bottling processes.

Recipe 1

1 cup of sugar ½ cup of strawberry juice
2lb. of whole strawberries

Crush and heat enough strawberries to yield ½ cup of juice; over-large, damaged, or misshapen strawberries can be used for this. Add the sugar to the juice, boil and cool it, add the whole strawberries, and boil them for 3