



Food Safety & Nutrition

Fruit Leathers



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Fruit leathers are a tasty, chewy, dried fruit product. It is an easy way to add fruit to a lunch or snack. They are made by pouring pureed fruit on a drying rack and dried in a commercial dehydrator or oven. They are very much like the commercial fruit roll ups and dried fruit sheets, but with less sugar and a truer taste of fruit.

Fruit leathers can be made from leftover fruits, fruit that is too overripe to preserve, extra fruit pulp left from making jellies, or from canned and frozen fruit. When making fruit leather at home you can control how much sugar is added. For the diabetic fruit leathers without sugar are a healthy choice for snacks or desserts. Individual fruit leathers should contain the amount of fruit allowed for a fruit exchange.

To make fruit leathers from fresh fruit wash the fruit or berries in cool water and remove the peel, seeds and stems. If using canned or frozen fruits be sure to drain the fruit well. Puree the fruit in a blender until smooth. Add 2 teaspoons of bottled lemon juice to light colored fruits to prevent darkening.

The fruit pulp can be dried at this point or a sweetener and/or flavoring may be added. It is best to taste the puree at this point. If it needs flavoring or sweetener, add at this time. (See suggestions below)

Sometimes the fruit purees, especially those made from canned or frozen fruits, will be very juicy. Applesauce or bananas can be added to thicken the juicy purees, decreased the tartness and make the leather smoother.

When the puree is the thickness and taste preferred, pour onto a fruit leather drying sheet. Spread puree evenly to about 1/8 inch thick. If oven drying cover a cookie sheet with plastic wrap and then pour puree onto the plastic wrap. If using a commercial dehydrator, use the fruit leather drying sheets. When spreading the puree, avoid using a spatula or other utensil. Take the tray and tap it gently on the counter surface and tilt it so to spread the puree. When using a spatula it will cause the puree to have high and low spots that will dry unevenly.

Dry fruit leathers at 140° degrees F. It will dry from the outside edge toward the center. Test for dryness by touching the center of the leather. It should not feel moist at all. It may feel sticky.

When dried, take the warm leather and peel from the plastic and roll. Allow the leather to cool before rewrapping in plastic. To make leather strips, roll the entire leather piece in plastic wrap. Then cut into pieces about 1 inch in width. Cooled fruit leather can also be cut into fun shapes using cookie cutters. Roll and wrap those shapes well.

For best storage it is recommended to put the rolled leathers in the refrigerator or for longer storage in the freezer. If there is any moisture in the fruit leather at all, they may mold when stored at room temperature for very long.

For more information about drying fruit leathers, fruits or vegetables, contact the WSU Cooperative Extension office in Brush Prairie for the "Drying Fruits and Vegetables" publication. Call 397-6060 Ext. 0.

Adding Sweetness and flavoring to fruit leather.

Once you have the basics of making fruit leathers it is fun to try some new flavoring, toppings, or fillings. Below are some new ideas.

Sweetening - If the puree needs some sweetening, add up to ½ cup sugar for each 2 cups of fruit. Sugar substitutes may be used. Aspartame sweeteners however may lose sweetness during drying.

Spices – Add spices to the puree. Add until the taste is acceptable. Begin by adding 1/8-teaspoon for each 2 cups of puree. Try: cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mint, nutmeg, allspice.

Flavorings – Add flavorings to the puree using only 1/8-teaspoon per 2 cups of puree to start. Try almond extract, lemon peel, orange extract, vanilla or peppermint.

Toppings – After spreading the puree on the drying sheet and before drying, sprinkle a topping over the puree. Try not to cover entire puree, but just lightly sprinkle the topping. Try coconut, dried fruits, granola, and sunflower seeds.

Fillings – After the fruit leather is dried and cool, spread a thin layer of these fillings. Then roll, cut and serve. If not served immediately, store in the refrigerator or wait to spread filling until just before serving. Try – melted chocolate, softened cream cheese, peanut butter, marshmallow cream, jam or jelly.

Here is an idea for adding dairy foods and calcium to your diet in a fun tasty way.

Yogurt Drops

1 8-ounce vanilla yogurt

1 3-oz package of sugar free gelatin powder (any flavor)

Mix the gelatin powder with the yogurt. Using a spoon drop the mixture onto a fruit leather drying tray. They can be done in small rounds or as leather.

Dry until sticky. Store in the refrigerator or freezer. This makes great healthy snack and provides another way to get dairy products and calcium in the diet.
