

## Judging Jams, Jellies and Preserves

Headspace for jams, jellies, other sweet preserves and butters should be  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.

Canned jams, jellies and preserves should meet all of the general characteristics for container, pack, appearance of contents and attractiveness. The variety of fruits that are made into sweet spreads and preserves include many textures, shapes and colors, but it is still possible to describe desirable characteristics for each class of food.

Jelly is a semi-solid mixture of fruit juice and sugar that is clear and firm enough to hold its shape. Other spreads are made from and include chopped, crushed or ground fruit. Jam also will hold its shape, but it is less firm than jelly. Jam is made from crushed or chopped fruits and sugar. Jams made from a mixture of fruits are usually called conserves, especially when they include citrus fruits, nuts, raisins, or coconut. Marmalades are soft fruit jellies with small pieces of fruit or citrus peel evenly suspended in a transparent jelly. Traditional home canned preserves are made of small, whole fruits or uniform-size pieces of fruits in a clear, very thick to slightly jellied sugar syrup. Fruit butters are made from fruit pulp cooked with sugar until thickened to a spreadable consistency.

### Judging Criteria for Jellies

Jars of jelly should be held up to a good light source to check for clarity and color. Any sample taken out of the jar to check tenderness and consistency should not be put back into the jar. The consistency of jelly can be judged without removing from the jar. Turn the jar on its side and give it a single, sharp shake. Then rotate the jar slowly at an angle or on its side. The jelly should pull away from the jar cleanly, without breaking and without leaving any residue on the jar. The shape of the jar should be retained and the entire mass of jelly should be able to be rolled around inside the jar in one mass. If a single, sharp shake does not loosen the jelly, try tapping the bottom edge of the jar against the heel of the hand.

Clarity or Clearness	Clear, usually sparkling, transparent or translucent (depending on fruit juice). Free from sediment, cloudiness, pulp or crystals. Pepper jellies will be a little cloudier or have slight amount of pulp that should be suspended throughout the jar.
Color	Natural coloring. Close to characteristic color of original juice.

### **Judging Criteria for Jellies**

Pack	Headspace ¼ inch. No paraffin seals allowed. Free from air bubbles and foam.
Consistency	Firm enough to hold shape, but tender (quivers). Entire half-pint or pint jar contents should stay together and not break apart. Leaves clean, sharp edge when cut. Not sticky, gummy or syrupy.
Container	Properly labeled. Clean, clear standard half-pint or pint canning jars only. No cracks, chips, or rust on jar. Recommended lid with good vacuum seal. Band free of rust and dents or other damage; clean and easily removed.
Flavor/Odor	If jelly is tasted: Characteristic of the base fruit. Not too sweet or too tart. No scorched (burned) or musty odors.

### **Judging Criteria for Jams and Conserves**

Jams are made from chopped, crushed or ground fruit. Shape of the fruit pieces is not retained during preparation. Jam is a shapeless mass outside of the jar, with a uniform, soft consistency thick enough to spread. Juices are of a slight jelly-like consistency. Conserves are a combination of fruits, usually citrus fruits and nuts, and sometimes raisins or coconut, with a consistency like jam.

Clarity or Clearness	Even though there is no separated jelled juice, the jam and conserve should be translucent and not “muddy” looking. Free from separation into layers, sediment, cloudiness or crystals.
Color	Natural coloring. Characteristic of the cooked fruit. Free of discoloration, especially from burning or scorching in preparation.
Pack	Headspace ¼ inch. No paraffin seals allowed. Free from air bubbles and foam.
Consistency	Smooth, thick, uniform throughout. Easily spreadable; not too stiff. Not runny, gummy or syrupy.

## **Judging Criteria for Jams and Conserves**

Container	Properly labeled. Clean, clear standard half-pint or pint canning jars only. No cracks, chips, or rust on jar. Recommended lid with good vacuum seal. Band free of rust and dents or other damage; clean and easily removed.
Flavor/Odor	If jam or conserve is tasted: Characteristic of the natural fruit. Not too sweet or too tart. Not overcooked or burned. The flavor of a conserve should be that of the dominant fruit. No scorched (burned) or musty odors.

## **Judging Criteria for Preserves and Marmalades**

Traditional fruit preserves consist of small, whole fruits or uniformly sized pieces of larger fruits in a very thick sugar syrup or slightly jellied juice. Very thin slices or lemon or lemon juice may have been added. Marmalades consist of pieces of fruit cut in small pieces or slices, and usually include citrus. A mixture of fruits may be used. The pieces of fruit or citrus peel are suspended in a clear, translucent jelly.

Clarity or Clearness	Syrup or jellied juice is clear, and bright in color. Syrup in preserves appears thick to “heavy” like honey and surrounds all fruit. Free from mushy broken-apart fruit tissue, sediment, cloudiness, or crystals.
Color	Natural coloring. Characteristic of the base fruit. Pieces of fruit are translucent to clear.
Pack	Headspace ¼ inch. No paraffin seals allowed. Good proportion of syrup and solids. Fruit well covered with syrup in preserves. Free from air bubbles and foam.
Texture/Consistency	Fruit pieces are tender and hold their shape. Pieces of fruit are uniform in size.
Container	Properly labeled. Clean, clear standard half-pint or pint canning jars only. No cracks, chips, or rust on jar. Recommended lid with good vacuum seal. Band free of rust and dents or other damage; clean and easily removed.
Flavor/Odor	If preserves or marmalade are tasted: Natural flavor. Not too sweet or strong flavor from overcooking. No scorched (burned) or musty odors.

## **Judging Criteria for Fruit Butters**

Fruit butters are made from fruit pulp cooked with sugar until thickened to a spreadable consistency. They are smooth with even, fine-grained textures of medium-soft consistency. They are not jelled and are usually less sweet than jams, conserves, marmalades or preserves. When the closed jar is turned on its side, a fruit butter should move very slowly and in a solid mass.

Color	Natural coloring. No darkening or discoloration from burning (scorching) during cooking. Spices such as cinnamon, allspice and cloves may darken the butters.
Pack	Headspace $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. No paraffin seals allowed. Free from trapped air or bubbles.
Consistency	Smooth, even grain. Thick enough to mound on spoon. Not runny. No separation of fruit and juice. No pieces of skin, seeds or other foreign matter.
Container	Properly labeled. Clean, clear standard half-pint or pint canning jars only. No cracks, chips, or rust on jar. Recommended lid with good vacuum seal. Band free of rust and dents or other damage; clean and easily removed.



## Sweet Preserves Canning Summary Sheet for Judges USDA Recommendations\*

### SWEET PRESERVES – BOILING WATER

### Minutes in Boiling Water at Altitudes of

	Headspace	Style of Pack	Jar Size		0 - 1,000 ft	1,001 - 3,000 ft	3,001 - 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
<b><i>Jam and Jelly</i></b>								

The USDA *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (1994 revision) has the following recommendations for processing: jam without added pectin, jelly without added pectin, and jams and jellies with added pectins, to prevent spoilage:

Pre-sterilized jars	¼ inch	Hot	Half Pint & Pint		5	10	10	15
Unsterile (but clean, hot) jars	¼ inch	Hot	Half Pint & Pint		10	15	15	20

The use of paraffin or wax seals are not recommended for any sweet spread, including jellies. The use of an “inversion” method, or turning filled jars over to stand on the lid for a period of time, in place of boiling water processing (or at all), is not recommended by USDA.

There are five jam or jelly recipes in the USDA *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (1994 revision):

Blueberry-Spice Jam	¼ inch	Hot	Half Pint &		5	10	10	15
		Hot	Pint		5	10	10	15
Pear-Apple Jam	¼ inch	Hot	Half Pint &		5	10	10	15
		Hot	Pint		5	10	10	15

\* Source: *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, US Department of Agriculture. Revised 1994. [www.homefoodpreservation.com](http://www.homefoodpreservation.com)

**SWEET PRESERVES –  
BOILING WATER**

	Headspace	Style of Pack	Jar Size	Minutes in Boiling Water at Altitudes of			
				0 - 1,000 ft	1,001 - 3,000 ft	3,001 - 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Grape-Plum Jelly	¼ inch	Hot Hot	Half Pint & Pint	5 5	10 10	10 10	15 15
Strawberry-Rhubarb Jelly	¼ inch	Hot Hot	Half Pint & Pint	5 5	10 10	10 10	15 15
Reduced-Sugar Peach-Pineapple Spread, USDA recipe	¼ inch	Hot Hot	Half Pint Pint	15 20	20 25	20 30	25 35
<b>Butters</b>							
Apple Butter	¼ inch	Hot Hot	Half Pint & Pint Quart	5 10	10 15	10 15	15 20
<b>Fruit Syrups</b>							
Berry Syrup	½ inch	Hot Hot	Half Pint & Pint	10 10	15 15	15 15	20 20
<b>Pie Fillings</b>							
Apple Pie Filling with Clear Jel®	1 inch	Hot Hot	Pint & Quart	25 25	30 30	35 35	40 40
Blueberry Pie Filling with Clear Jel®	1 inch	Hot Hot	Pint & Quart	30 30	35 35	40 40	45 45

\* Source: *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, US Department of Agriculture. Revised 1994. [www.homefoodpreservation.com](http://www.homefoodpreservation.com)

Developed by The University of Georgia, Athens, for the National Center for Home Food Preservation. Released by Elizabeth L. Address, Ph.D., Department of Foods and Nutrition, College of Family and Consumer Sciences. August 2003.

**SWEET PRESERVES –  
BOILING WATER**

	Headspace	Style of Pack	Jar Size	Minutes in Boiling Water at Altitudes of			
				0 - 1,000 ft	1,001 - 3,000 ft	3,001 - 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Cherry Pie Filling with Clear Jel®	1 inch	Hot Hot	Pint & Quart	30 30	35 35	40 40	45 45
Peach Pie Filling with Clear Jel®	1 inch	Hot Hot	Pint & Quart	30 30	35 35	40 40	45 45
Festive Mincemeat Pie Filling				This is a pressure-processed product and found on the pressure canning (meats) canning summary sheet, p. 68.			
Green Tomato Pie Filling	½ inch	Hot Hot	Pint & Quart	15 15	20 20	20 20	25 25
<b><i>Spiced and/or Pickled Fruit</i></b>							
Spiced Apple Rings	½ inch	Hot Hot	Half Pint & Pint	10 10	15 15	15 15	20 20
Spiced Crab Apples	½ inch	Hot	Pint	20	25	30	35
Zucchini Pineapple	½ inch	Hot Hot	Half Pint & Pint	15 15	20 20	20 20	25 25

\* Source: *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, US Department of Agriculture. Revised 1994. [www.homefoodpreservation.com](http://www.homefoodpreservation.com)

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## Jellies

Characteristic	Points	
<b>Pack</b> Processed in boiling water canner with correct altitude adjustment made; no paraffin allowed.	10	
Jar filled to appropriate headspace (¼ inch).		
<b>Color</b> Fresh, natural color representative of dominant fruit	20	
Color uniform throughout		
<b>Clarity</b> Free from cloudiness and fruit pulp (exception: pepper jelly)	25	
Absence of crystals		
Free of bubbles		
Free of foreign matter (peel, seeds, etc.) and mold		
<b>Consistency</b> Firm enough to hold shape	25	
Tender, not too stiff or tough – “quivery”		
Stays in one mass when shaken loose from jar; does not break		
No separation or layering		
Holds sharp edge when cut		
<b>Container</b> Vacuum-sealed	10	
Clean, clear glass standard canning jar		
New lid and band free of rust; screwband clean, unbent and easily removed		
Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, date processed, processing method and time		
<b>Flavor/Odor</b> Natural flavor of the fruit; not overcooked, overly sweet or tart; no scorched flavor. No scorched or musty odor.	10	
		if not tasted, split points between clarity and container.
<b>Comments</b>    		



## Jams and Other Sweet Spreads

Characteristic	Points	
<b>Pack</b> Processed in boiling water canner with correct altitude adjustment made; no paraffin allowed. Jar filled to appropriate headspace (¼ inch).	10	
<b>Color</b> Fresh, natural color representative of dominant fruit; fruit pieces are translucent. Color uniform throughout. Free of discoloration, especially from scorching.	25	
<b>Clarity</b> Translucent and not “muddy” or cloudy looking, even though there is no separated jelled juice. Absence of crystals. Free of bubbles. Free of foreign matter (peel, seeds, etc.) and mold.	20	
<b>Consistency</b> Soft enough to spread; not runny or overly thick; not gummy or sticky. Fruit pieces are tender and hold their shape. Pieces of fruit are uniform in size. Fruit pieces evenly distributed throughout container. No separation or layering.	25	
<b>Container</b> Vacuum-sealed. Clean, clear glass standard canning jar. New lid and band free of rust; screwband clean, unbent and easily removed. Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, date processed, processing method and time.	10	
<b>Flavor/Odor</b> Natural flavor of the fruit; not overcooked, overly sweet or tart; no scorched flavor. No scorched or musty odor.	10	if not tasted, split points between clarity and container.
<b>Comments</b>    		

## Fruit Preserves

Characteristic	Points	
<b>Pack</b> Processed in boiling water canner with correct altitude adjustment made; no open kettle canning.	25	
Jar filled to appropriate headspace (¼ inch).		
Liquid covers all solids; no floating pieces.		
Good proportion of solids and liquids.		
<b>Quality of Fruit</b> Pieces uniform in size and shape.	25	
Fresh, natural color to fruit; uniformly translucent and characteristic of cooked product.		
Pieces retain shape; firm yet tender; free of mushiness; clean cut edges to cut pieces.		
Fruit free from discoloration, blemishes, bruises, brown or black spots, insect damage.		
<b>Quality of Syrup</b> Syrup or jellied juice is clear, and bright in color. Syrup in most preserves appears thick to “heavy” like honey and surrounds all fruit.	25	
Free from any sediment, unintended seeds, peels, or other particles such as fibers, core and strings.		
Free from foam or large amounts of trapped air; few bubbles.		
<b>Container</b> Vacuum-sealed.	15	
Clean, clear glass standard canning jar.		
New lid and band free of rust; screwband clean, unbent and easily removed.		
Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, date processed, processing method and time.		
<b>Flavor/Odor</b> Natural flavor of the fruit; not too sweet or strong from overcooking. No scorched or musty odor.	10	
	if not tasted, split points between pack and quality of fruit.	
<b>Comments</b>		