

Elderflower and Strawberry Preserve



This recipe for elderflower and strawberry conserve is the essence of summer in a pot – sweet and highly fragranced, delicious served with homemade bread and butter or spooned over vanilla ice cream. For best results, hull the strawberries the day before and soak them overnight in lemon juice. The elderflowers are best picked on the same morning you make the jam, when they are at their freshest. The flowers of the elder tree (*Sambucus nigra*) come into bloom from mid-May onwards – but only last a couple of weeks, so don't delay when you first see them. Elderflowers are best harvested when the buds are freshly open on a warm, dry, sunny day, well away from traffic fumes.

You will need

- 500g strawberries
- 500g jam sugar
- juice of 1 lemon
- 2-3 elderflower heads

2 x 500g jam jars, washed and sterilised in a low oven (160C) for 10 minutes

1. Wash and hull the strawberries. Place the whole fruits in a bowl, squeeze over the lemon juice and set aside to macerate overnight, covered with a clean tea towel.
2. The following day, place a couple of saucers into the freezer ready for testing the 'set' of the jam later.
3. Shake the elderflower heads really well and snip off all of the tiny flowers, discarding the stalks.
4. Tip the strawberry-lemon mixture into a large, heavy-based pan and warm gently over a low heat.
5. Bring briefly to the boil, and then simmer gently for about 5 minutes or until the fruit has softened.
6. Reduce the heat to low and add the sugar, stirring gently until all of the crystals have dissolved.
7. Bring to a rolling boil and cook for 10 minutes without stirring.
8. Skim off any scum that rises to the surface with a metal spoon.
9. Throw in the elderflowers and continue boiling for a further 3 minutes.
10. Test the set: remove the pan from the heat and drop a teaspoonful of the jam onto one of the cold saucers; allow the jam to cool, and then swipe your finger across the jam and see if it wrinkles. If it wrinkles, the jam is ready. If it doesn't, return the pan to the heat for a few minutes longer before testing again.
11. Once the jam has reached setting point, skim the surface again and set aside to cool.
12. Ladle the jam into sterilised jars and seal with waxed paper discs and lids.
13. Label your jars and store in a cool, dry place. Once opened, store in the fridge.