

Preserving Grapes



Grape Fast Facts

- Store grapes very cold (32°F to 40°F), in ventilated plastic bags.
- Preserve grapes by canning, pickling, freezing, or drying.
- One pound of grapes is equivalent to 2 dry pints, 4 cups whole, 3 cups halved, 2½ cups purée, or 1 ½ cups juice.
- **To prepare grapes:** Wash fruit and pull off stems. Discard grapes that are moldy or soft from rotting. Leave grapes whole or cut in half and remove seeds as directed.

Grape Juice: Prepare 3½ pounds grapes, cut in half. Measure fruit into a saucepan, crush slightly, and add 1 cup hot water for each quart of fruit. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, for 10 to 15 minutes or until soft. Transfer to a fine mesh strainer, or colander lined with a double layer of dampened cheesecloth, set over a bowl. Drain undisturbed for 2 hours. Discard solids in the strainer (or use to make jam or leather). In a saucepan, combine juice with 1 tablespoon sugar (or to taste). Sugar may be omitted, but helps retain color and flavor. Refrigerate juice and use within 3 days, or transfer to freezer-safe container and freeze up to 12 months.

Canned Grape Juice: In a saucepan over medium-high heat, heat juice to 190°F; adjust heat as needed and keep juice at 190°F for 5 minutes. Do not boil. Keep hot while filling jars; adjust headspace to ¼-inch. Process pints or quarts for 15 minutes (at 0 to 1,000 feet).

Verjuice (Green Juice): Coarsely chop about 1 pound underripe red or green grapes. Press through a fine mesh sieve to make 1 cup juice. Place juice in a sterilized 1-quart jar. Add 1/2 cup chopped grapes, 1/4 cup granulated sugar, 2 cups 80-proof vodka, and 1/2 cup white vinegar. Cover jar; refrigerate 2 months. Strain liquid and transfer to a sterilized jar. Discard solids. Verjuice keeps indefinitely. Use to deglaze pan sauces for poultry or ham.

Grape Jelly: In a heavy stainless or enamel saucepan, stir together 1 cup grape juice and 3/4 cup granulated sugar. Boil over high heat, stirring constantly, until sugar dissolves. Refrigerate and use within 1 month. For longer storage, keep jam hot while filling jars; adjust headspace to ¼-inch. Process half-pints or pints for 10 minutes (at 0 to 1,000 feet).

Pickled grapes: Prepare 2¼ pounds fruit per quart. In a saucepan, stir together 1½ cups sugar, 1/2 cup vinegar, 1/2 cup grape juice or water, 1/2 stick cinnamon, and 2-3 whole cloves. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and

simmer 10-15 minutes. Add prepared whole grapes. Cook 5 minutes. Cool, cover, and refrigerate up to 1 month. For longer storage, fill hot canning jars with hot grapes and pickling liquid; adjust headspace to ½-inch. Process pickled grape pints or quarts for 15 minutes (at 0 to 1,000 feet).

Dried grapes: Prepare grape halves; remove seeds if present. Place grapes on drying trays cut side up. Preheat an oven or food dehydrator to 130°F to 140°F. Dry grapes until pliable for snacking, or until crisp for longer storage. Cool until no longer warm; store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for about 2 months. Freeze for longer storage.

Dried grape leather: Leathers are made from purées that are spread thin and dried until supple and chewy. For best results with grapes, first prepare juice from seedless grapes; then make leather from the leftover strained fruit. If desired, add 2 tablespoons sugar or honey, and/or 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Preheat oven or food dehydrator to 130°F to 140°F. Line drying tray with plastic wrap. Spread purée 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick on liner. Dry until leather is evenly pliable and firm with no soft spots. Peel from liner while still warm. Cut or roll into serving pieces. Cool before wrapping pieces individually. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place up to 2 months. Freeze for longer storage.

Grape Vinegar: Dissolve 1/4 packet wine or beer yeast in a small amount of tepid water. Let stand 10-15 minutes, or until foamy. In a clean and sanitized 1-quart glass jar, add 2 cups room-temperature (red or white) grape juice. Cap it and shake to mix thoroughly. Add more juice, filling the jar no more than 3/4 full. Cover the jar with a clean piece of clean cheesecloth (or a towel). Store at warm room temperature (70°F to 75°F), away from light (for example, in a cupboard). It should be ready in 2-4 weeks, or when it tastes pleasantly tart. Use within 12 months.