

# How to Fix those Jam & Jelly Mistakes

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When it comes to making jams and jellies, there is definitely a learning curve. A small miscalculation in ingredients or cooking time can lead to a less-than-stellar outcome. Even seasoned jam and jelly makers make bad batches on occasion.

With some practice and attention to detail, you can usually avoid mistakes. But here are some ways you can salvage the batch if it doesn't turn out as expected.

## When it's Too Soft

It is possible to remake jelly or jam that is too soft. To do so, put ¼ cup sugar, ½ cup water, 2 tablespoons of lemon juice and 4 teaspoons of powdered pectin in a saucepan. Heat to boiling, stirring frequently. Add a 1200mls jelly and stir constantly until the mixture boils once again. Continue to boil for 30 seconds and remove from heat. Skim off the foam, pour into jars and process in a boiling water canner.

It's a little trickier to remake soft jams without pectin, but it can be done. Place a 1200mls of jam in a saucepan with 2 tablespoons of lemon juice and boil for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring constantly. Test for doneness by dipping a cool spoon into the mixture, then raising it a 30cm above the pan, holding it sideways. If the jam drips off, it needs to cook longer. It is done when it hangs off the edge of the spoon.

## When it's Too Stiff

Once you've made your jelly too thick, there's really no way to salvage it for preserving purposes. The best thing to do is determine what went wrong and avoid it next time. But your finished product won't have to go to waste. You can place it in a pot, add a small amount of fruit juice or water, and heat to boiling to thin it out. It may then be cooled and used immediately or stored in the refrigerator until used. You can also heat stiff jams and jellies to use as meat glaze or pancake syrup.

## Crystals, Bubbles and Other Problems

Here are some other jam and jelly issues and how to avoid or correct them.

**Formation of crystals** – This may be caused by using too much sugar or not allowing the sugar to dissolve completely while cooking. It can also happen if the batch is too large.

**Air bubbles** – Bubbles will form if the foam is not removed from the jam or jelly, or if it is not poured into jars immediately after cooking. It can also be a sign of spoilage in stored products.

**Cloudiness** – This may occur if you used green fruit or did not properly strain the juice when making jelly.

**Premature spoilage** – Spoilage is caused by yeast, mold or bacteria. Any of these may be found in unsterilized jars, and they can also make their way into jars that are not properly sealed. Always sterilize jars, use new flat lids and process in a boiling water canner for the recommended amount of time before storing.

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