

Title:

Strawberry Jammed Out

Word Count:

544

Summary:

Latest news from the strawberry jam front - the tide of strawberries is advancing, threatening to engulf me in a wave of strawberries waiting to be processed, taking up whole shelves of the fridge, lurking in corners just when I thought I'd done the last batch. Heaving a sigh of relief as the last pot is filled and sealed, I turn around only to find the kitchen table groaning under a fresh sea of newly picked strawberries waiting to be sorted.

Keywords:

strawberry jam, strawberries

Article Body:

Latest news from the strawberry jam front - the tide of strawberries is advancing, threatening to engulf me in a wave of strawberries waiting to be processed, taking up whole shelves of the fridge, lurking in corners just when I thought I'd done the last batch. Heaving a sigh of relief as the last pot is filled and sealed, I turn around only to find the kitchen table groaning under a fresh sea of newly picked strawberries waiting to be sorted.

There is no more room on the larder shelves for jam - what I've got there already will probably last us a decade at the current rate of consumption, I've used up all the jam jars and am down to oddly shaped mustard jars, coffee jars and outsized sauce jars and there are still a good few weeks of strawberry season to go.

I have to start selling the jam.....memories of a film, where ex-city career woman, moves to country with baby in tow, starts making apple puree baby food and ends up with a full scale business employing half the village, flit through my head. Country baby was her label, with a cute picture of baby, designed to appeal to other city people looking for the good life. Mind you she was a PR person, so had a head start on promoting things and I'm not a business person at all, just someone with too much jam on their hands, larder shelves and everywhere else in the house.

So, I take a stall at the local market and arrive with a basket of jam, a few

jars of marmalade for variety, a table and chair. I discover a few things - people smile when they see strawberry jam, people like strawberries, there is a high feel-good factor about them, they conjure up summer and celebration and treats. It's not a hard product to sell, people are predisposed in its favour; the price just has to be not too scary. Some people are more attracted by the pretty fabric covers on the lids and choose one to match their kitchen décor...I'll have to work on the pretty aspect. No I'm not about to become a strawberry jam millionaire, but I did sell ten jars.

After thinking I'd got the jam consistency sorted, producing reliably runny but not too runny jam, I suddenly turned out several batches that set completely - thick solid stand-up-your-spoon-in jam. Now I know it's all about pectin and how much there is in the fruit, but why now? I did leave it soaking in the sugar longer because I didn't get round to cooking it till the afternoon, but does that do anything to pectin levels?

Anyway, I now have two varieties of strawberry jam - thick and runny, both have a good flavour - and both sorts have their aficionados. But now the dilemma is, am I able to reproduce the thick jam to order or will it only happen by accident? We're a long way from scientific laboratory controlled conditions here.... a wing and a prayer is more like it. So prayer it'll have to be, if my market customers return demanding thick strawberry jam!

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