

Seasonal Eating
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Strawberry Jam
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It's a sweet time in middle Tennessee, if you love the taste of strawberries. While enjoying a fresh bowl of strawberries or your favorite strawberry enhanced dessert is a great use of fresh strawberries, let's take it a step further and preserve some strawberries to have when they are not in season too.

When selecting your fresh strawberries look for firm berries with a bright, even red color as they will not ripen any more after being picked. They should have a fresh aroma and a healthy, green cap with no mold, leaking juices or shriveled berries.

To prevent spoilage and mold growth during storage, it is best to wash berries just before they are prepared. Place the strawberries in a clean and sanitized colander and remove any damaged fruit. Wash the strawberries under clean, running water using a kitchen sink sprayer if possible. If you don't have a sprayer, wash, turn, and gently shake the berries under slow running water. Do not soak berries or use detergents, soaps or bleach to wash fresh strawberries as it may change the taste of the fruit and could be poisonous.

Strawberries can be either frozen or made into delicious jams, jellies, and preserves and even dried. How you intend to use the strawberries later can determine whether to freeze or preserve. Frozen strawberries work well in baking, smoothies, or eating as a topping (over yogurt) for example. Jams and jellies are good for topping biscuits, incorporating into baked goods, making vinaigrette salad dressings and glazing meats. Using a safety tested recipe and updated procedures for canning jams and spreads are important for the safety (and quality) of the product.

If you would like to learn more about preserving strawberries and other seasonal produce, join UT/TSU Extension on Zoom every third Friday at 10:00 a.m. from May to November for Extension Explores Food Preservation. The May 21st session will be all about how to freeze strawberries and make them into jams and jellies.

Go to <https://tiny.utk.edu/ExtensionExplores21> or look on the Bedford County Extension website at Bedford.tennessee.edu under family programs to register for free. You'll receive the links each month for the sessions and can attend the ones you want.

Below is an easy baked braid filled with strawberry jam, apricots and walnuts. It starts with a box of roll mix for a convenient way to make a delicious breakfast or brunch dish or an afternoon snack.



Strawberry Braid

1 (16-ounce) package hot roll mix
1 cup strawberry jam
1/2 cup finely chopped dried apricots
1/4 cup chopped toasted walnuts
1 tablespoon butter
2 teaspoons sugar

Prepare hot roll mix according to package directions. While dough is resting, combine the jam, apricots and walnuts in a bowl. Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface and roll into a 14x9 inch rectangle. Place on a greased foil lined baking sheet.

Spread filling down center third of rectangle. On each long side, cut 1 inch wide strips about 2 1/2" into center (up to where the filling starts). Starting at one end, fold alternating strips at an angle across filling. Pinch ends to seal. Cover and let rise until doubled, about 30 minutes. Brush braid with butter and sprinkle with sugar. Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack.