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Fruit Butters

Forethought is everything when it comes to keeping fresh fruit flavors on the table year-round. Preserving the summer and autumn harvests allows you to taste the delicious bounty throughout the long winter.

But it's not all about pickling and preserving. Think healthy, think butter—fruit butter, that is!

Silky in texture and rich in flavor, fruit butters are made from fruit that is cooked, puréed, and then cooked again. The resulting product has deep, rich flavor and buttery consistency. Fruit butters add flavor and nutrients to breakfast items such as yogurt, warm cereals, toast, and scones, as well as to savory sauces and desserts such as cobblers, tarts, ice cream, and frozen yogurt.

Fruit butters described in two words are concentrated and creamy. They're low in sugar and contain significant amounts of natural fiber in the form of pectin, the soluble fiber that helps lower cholesterol and other blood lipids. Despite their name, fruit butters contain zero to trace amounts of fat. It is their smooth, spreadable consistency that earns them the honorary title of butter.

Butters can be made from most fruits or fruit mixes. Apple is most commonly available, but apricots, cherries, figs, peaches, pears, and plums also make great butters. Wonderful quality fruit butters can be purchased at farmers' markets, gourmet stores, some health food or country stores, some supermarkets, and, of course, online. If you like the idea of doing it from scratch, here are some basic steps:

- Select ripe, sweet fruit. It takes about five large peaches or 10 apricots to make about 1 pint of fruit butter.
- Peel fruits with tough skins. (Peaches, plums, and apricots can be placed in boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes and then transferred to an ice bath; their skins will slip off.)
- For very smooth fruit butter, pulse the fruit in a food processor (or chop by hand) before cooking.
- Combine the fruit, sugar, and water in a saucepan. For every pound of chopped fruit, add 1 cup of sugar and 1 cup of water.
- Cook over medium-low to medium heat, stirring occasionally, to the desired thickness—30 to 90 minutes depending on the fruit and the amount of liquid.
- For extra-smooth fruit butter, use a handheld blender to purée. Can the butter using guidelines from the National Center for Home Food Preservation (www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_usda.html).

— Laura Pensiero, RD



Fig Butter

- 1 pound Turkish figs, chopped
- 1½ cups water
- ¼ cup white wine
- 1 rosemary sprig
- 2 shallots, peeled and minced

Combine all ingredients in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat and simmer until figs are soft and can be easily mashed, about 20 minutes. Transfer mixture to the work bowl of a food processor and purée until smooth. Return the saucepan and cook, stirring often, over low-medium heat until thick and silky, about 10 minutes.

TD&N Nutrient Analysis (based on 6 servings): Calories: 69; Total Fat: 0 g; Saturated Fat: 0 g; Polyunsaturated Fat: 0 g; Monounsaturated Fat: 0 g; Cholesterol: 0 mg; Sodium: 4 mg; Carbohydrates: 16 g; Fiber: 2 g; Protein: 1 g

Turkey, Cheddar, and Apple Butter Sandwiches

Serves 4

- 4 whole grain rolls halved horizontally, or 8½-inch-thick slices country-style bread
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 8 tablespoons apple butter
- 4 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 pound thinly sliced turkey breast
- 8 ounces extra-sharp white cheddar cheese, thinly sliced
- 2 cups baby greens, well rinsed and spun dry

Arrange oven rack so it's about 5 to 6 inches from broiler; preheat broiler. Brush roll halves or bread slices with oil. Place rolls, cut side up, on baking sheet. Broil until the rolls lightly brown, 1½ to 2 minutes.

Spread apple butter and mustard on each roll half or bread slice. Top four bread halves with turkey and then cheese. Divide the greens among the other four bread halves and place on serving plates. Broil the four meat and cheese topped rolls until the cheese is bubbly, about 1 minute. Remove the pan from the heat and close the sandwich halves. Serve immediately.

TD&N Nutrient Analysis: Calories: 618; Total Fat: 31 g; Saturated Fat: 14 g; Polyunsaturated Fat: 2 g; Monounsaturated Fat: 6 g; Cholesterol: 110 mg; Sodium: 2,106 mg; Carbohydrates: 46 g; Fiber: 5 g; Protein: 36 g



**TD&N
Tip**

Using low-fat cheese saves 146 calories, 16 grams of fat, and 10 grams of saturated fat.