

Prickly Pear Jelly

Prickly Pear is a cactus that grows in Arizona. It has flat, rounded pads, orange and yellow flowers, and sweet, purplish fruit. Since the prickly pear cactus needs plenty of sun, sandy soil, and very little water to grow, Arizona is the perfect home for this cactus.¹

The prickly pear cactus is a source of food for many animals and people in the desert. One treat many people of the Southwest enjoy comes from the fruit of this cactus is Prickly Pear Jelly.



Prepare Fruit:

- Wearing gloves and using tongs, gather about 2 quarts of pears, including a few that are not fully ripe.
- Hold pears under running water and scrub with a brush to knock off small stickers.

Or purchase prepared fruit at Arizona Cactus Ranch, (800) 582-9903,
www.arizonacactusranch.com

You Need:

- 2 quarts prickly pears
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces powdered pectin (a gelling agent for jams and jellies, can be purchased at your local grocery store with canning supplies)
- 3 tablespoons lemon or lime juice
- 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar

Step 1: Without peeling, slice pears in large pieces and put in large kettle with enough water to barely cover.

Step 2: Boil until tender, about 20 to 25 minutes.

Step 3: Press with potato masher and strain through jelly bag or 2 thicknesses of cheesecloth. Spines will come off fruit during this process.

Step 4: To a pan add 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups juice, and 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ -ounce powdered pectin.

Step 5: Bring to fast boil, stirring constantly.

Step 6: Add 3 tablespoons lemon or lime juice and 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar.

Step 7: Bring to hard boil.

Step 8: Cook for 3 minutes at a rolling boil.

Step 9: Remove from heat, skim and pour into sterilized jelly glasses. Seal at once with 1/8-inch melted paraffin, a wax that prevents the jelly from going bad (can be purchased at your local grocery store with canning supplies).

***Recipe from Fruits of the Desert by Sandal English.**

¹ "Opuntia engelmannii," Tucson Botanical Gardens. Desert Connections.
<http://www.tucsonbotanical.org/desertconnections/page-display-2.php?plantid=105>.