



## Making Fruit Leather

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One of the best parts of summer is all of the delicious fruits and vegetables that are in season. Having an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables is never a bad thing, however, finding ways to use these items before they go bad can be a challenge.

Homesteading is all about self-sufficiency so it is important to make the most out of each harvest. Thankfully, there are a multitude of different things you can do with fresh fruit; such as freezing, canning, fermenting, dehydrating, and the list goes on and on. Fruit leather is a great way to incorporate those fruits into a tasty snack for all members of the family. Fruit leather is a chewy, homemade fruit roll that is made with pureed fruit and then laid flat to dry. Any type of fruit can be used to make fruit leather and using over-ripe or bruised fruits is a great way to make the most out of any harvest and prevent waste.

When making fruit leather, applesauce is always a great addition. Not only does it add flavor, but it also makes the leather more pliable and reduces tartness. Applesauce is a great extender which can be helpful during those times when berries or other fruits are hard to come by. This is a great way to use up those canned jars of homemade applesauce that may be laying around from the Fall!

Fruit leather is a delicious and nutritious snack. One of the most abundant nutrients in fruit is vitamin C. Unfortunately, vitamin C is very sensitive to air and heat, and thus gets destroyed during the formation of fruit leather. There are a few ways to minimize the loss of this nutrient when making this product. Decreasing the air temperature while approaching complete dryness of the fruit leather can lower the loss of vitamin C, as well as storing your completed fruit leather in a cool, dry, and dark place.

Making fruit leather from fresh fruit is simple. First, wash all fresh fruit in cool water and remove the peel, seeds, and stems. Next cut all fruit into small chunks and puree until it is smooth. Adding two teaspoons of lemon juice or 1/8 teaspoon of ascorbic acid to this mixture can help prevent any browning or darkening from occurring. Most fruits are naturally sweet, however, adding sugar, honey, or corn syrup can also be added if desired. The next step is to prepare the trays. When dehydrating in an oven, cookie sheets lined with parchment paper work best, or if a food dehydrator is being used, those specially designed plastic liners for the dryer trays are recommended. The last step is to pour the puree onto the trays to a thickness of 1/8-1/4 inches, and dry the fruit leather at 140°F for up to 18 hours in the oven or 6-8 hours in a food dehydrator. Cut the fruit leather into rolls or fun shapes and enjoy!

For more information on making fruit leather check out The National Center for Home Food Preservation at [https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/dry/fruit\\_leathers.html](https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/dry/fruit_leathers.html)