

## Pickled Strawberry Preserves (via David Lebovitz)

Makes two jars (about 3 cups, 750g) Great over ice cream.

Adapted from Seven Spoons by Tara O'Brady

Tara originally called for coriander seeds in her recipe, and I swapped out allspice since I like the sharp kick of allspice berries. You could use anything from star anise to cinnamon either along with the allspice, or swap out whatever spices you think that you might like. I would avoid going with too many though, as you want to flavor of the vinegared strawberries to be front and center. She also uses Champagne vinegar, which is not so easy to find in France (they don't like the name "Champagne" to be associated with vinegar!) So you could use that in place of the apple cider vinegar that I used here. Although I'm not a fan of it on salads, a couple of discrete drops of balsamic vinegar will enrich the flavor, if you have any on hand.

- 1 lemon, preferably organic or unsprayed
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns, plus additional for finishing the preserves
- 14 allspice berries
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 pounds (900g) strawberries, rinsed and hulled
- 1 1/3 cups (265g) sugar
- 1/4 cup (60ml) cider vinegar
- optional: A few drops balsamic vinegar
- 1/8 teaspoon kosher or sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon butter, salted or unsalted

1. Juice the lemon and pour the juice into a small nonreactive bowl. (Save the lemon halves.) Put the seeds in a piece of cheesecloth along with the peppercorns, allspice berries, and bay leaves, and give it a few whacks with a hammer or rolling pin. Add the bag to the lemon juice.

2. Cut the strawberries into quarters, or if they are small, you can cut them in half. If you have a mix, cut them all so they are approximately the same size. You just don't want them too small.

3. Toss the strawberries in a separate bowl with the sugar, vinegar, and salt. Cover and let sit at room temperature for a few hours (2-3), stirring occasionally.

4. Set a colander or large strainer over a wide, nonreactive cooking pot. Scrape the berries and their juices into the colander or strainer so the juices go into the cooking pot. Remove the colander with the macerated berries in it and set it aside. (I put it back in the bowl so it doesn't drip on the counter.)

5. Add the lemon juice, the spice bag, the reserved lemon halves, and the butter to the strawberry juices in the pot and cook over medium-high heat until the juices begin to thicken, about 6 or 7 minutes. Add the strawberries and continue to cook, stirring gently every so often, until the berries are plump and softened, but not bursting apart. It will take about 8 to 10 minutes. You want the berries to remain in fairly distinct pieces.

6. Remove from heat, then discard the spice bag as well as the lemon rinds. Grind a bit more black pepper into the strawberries and ladle them into jars and cover.

**Storage:** The pickled strawberries can be kept in the refrigerator for up to 1 month. If you wish to can them, check the guidelines and directions at the USDA website.