

Applesauce

Makes about 4 quart jars

12 pounds of apples

Water

1 cup sugar (optional)

¼ cup lemon juice

Cinnamon and nutmeg (optional)

My favorite apples for applesauce are Gravenstein apples. Its twisted gnarled branches reach out and when laden with their green and blush of pink, it reminds me of how the garden of Eden must have looked. They're an old-fashioned heirloom apple. My parents have an old Gravenstein tree on their property that produces a bumper crop every few years. On those years, I make up as much applesauce as possible. Their flavor is so perfect on its own; I don't add any spices or sugar. If you can get yourself some Gravensteins grab them up. They're harder to find and we planted one in our orchard last year, but it will take several years before it produces a good sized crop.

I usually choose seconds (not as high quality) apples for applesauce. While I like a crisp apple for munching on, mealy or softer apples work great for applesauce and prevents them from going to waste as most people don't like to snack on them.

The prep work on your apples will depend upon the equipment you have in your kitchen. **If you have a sieve** (conical shaped with small holes to catch the seeds and skins but allows the cooked food to go through it) or a food mill, then you simply put your whole apples into a large stock pot one to two layers deep. Add an inch or two of water, with the lid on bring water to a slow simmer. (Think boiling whole potatoes, but we don't want the water to cover the apples as it will water down our finished sauce too much.) Check your apples at ten minutes (length of time depends on how big the apples are) for doneness and water level. You don't want to let it boil dry and scorch. You can stir the apples around a bit at this point to help prevent the bottom layer from

scorching. Apples are done when the skins are split and they're soft all the way through.

Once they're warm, but not hot enough to burn you, run the apples through your sieve or food mill. Put the processed apples back into your stock pot. Use the skins to make homemade vinegar, feed to the chickens (warning, chickens are very fond of apple scraps) or place in your compost pile, otherwise you'll need to peel, core, and slice your apples. Put them in a large stock pot about 2/3 of the way full with enough room to stir and add a cup of water to prevent sticking. Bring to a boil and allow apples to simmer. Stir frequently to prevent scorching on the bottom. Once soft and cooked through, mash with a potato masher.

Heat the applesauce on medium until it's heated all the way through, but not boiling. I generally do not add sugar to my homemade applesauce, but this will depend upon your variety of apples and palate. If they're a tart apple or a tad under ripe, I add the smallest amount of sugar possible. I like to add cinnamon and a dash of nutmeg. Add lemon juice in and stir. The addition of lemon juice is to ensure the proper level of acidity. Some canning sources call for it and others don't, to be on the safe side, we'll add it in.

I leave my jars in the hot wash water until right before filling. Rinse jars with hot water and place on a towel folded over in thirds. Pour warm applesauce into jars with a 1/2 inch headspace. Wipe rim of jar with a clean cloth and place lids and bands on jar.

I put up both pint and quart sized jars. The size you choose will depend upon the size of your family and how much you'll eat in one sitting. If I know I'll be doing a lot of baking I open a quart sized jar, if it's just for snacking, I use the pint sized jar.

Applesauce is acidic enough it can be safely canned in a water bath. I will often use my pressure canner as it heats up faster and uses

less water. In a water bath canner process pint sized jars for 15 minutes and quart sized jars for 20 minutes. In a pressure canner process pint sized jars at 5 pounds of pressure for 8 minutes and quart sized jars for 10 minutes