

Consuming Thoughts

by
Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension Home Economist For Berks Co.



Want to make a sweet-but-not-sugary holiday treat? You can make low-sugar jellies to give as gifts from your kitchen. Just combine unsweetened bottled or frozen juices with commercial "lite" gelling products to create homemade jell-

ies with little or no added sugar or with non-sugar sweeteners.

For good, safe results, follow gelling product instructions and recipes exactly. The correct balance of the gelling ingredient, sugar and fruit juice, is critical for a product that will "set up" and keep safely. Any change in method, ingredients or measurements will affect the set of the jelly. When the lite gelling product calls for sugar, the sugar helps preserve the product; mold inhibitors also enhance product storability.

Use only recipes that have been developed for the product. Don't try to adapt your own recipe

or use one made for another product. Don't double the recipe; that's a basic rule with any jam, jelly or preserve recipe.

Flavor and texture of the reduced-sugar jellies depend on how much sugar is used. If you reduce the sugar measurement called for, the product will be too soft. Use only pure cane sugar—not honey or brown sugar or fructose. Not all lite gelling products can be used with non-sugar sweeteners, so check product labels and directions carefully.

Measure carefully and use standard measuring spoons for

measures of less than one-quarter cup, standard dry measuring cups for sugar, and standard liquid measuring cups for fruit juice. Place the jars in warm water, bring to a boil, then let the jars stand at least 10 minutes.

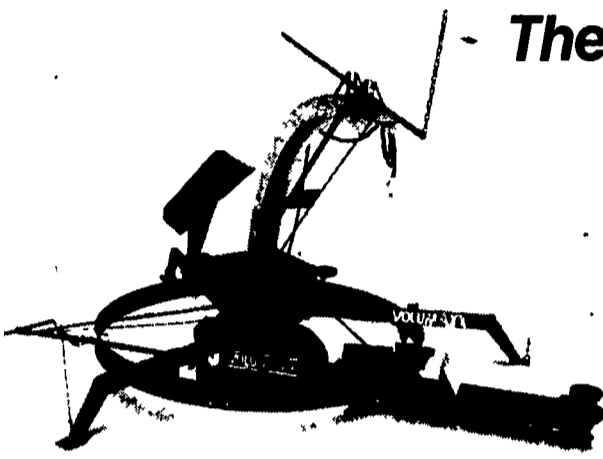
When your lite jelly is done, resist temptation. To improve product consistency, let it set for several days before you use it.

How many calories you can save with these products depends on how much sugar is used. Those made with no sugar may have as few as five calories per tablespoon; those made with a third less sugar than a regular recipe may contain 20 calories per tablespoon.

These jellies won't match regular jelly in appearance, texture and flavor. A jelly made with no sugar at all probably will seem tart and bland. Jelly without sugar or with non-sugar sweeteners will be somewhat cloudy. The sugar in reduced-sugar products brings these jellies closer to the "ideal" in flavor, clarity and set. These lite jellies may "weep," especially after refrigeration, which also may make them firmer and harder to spread.

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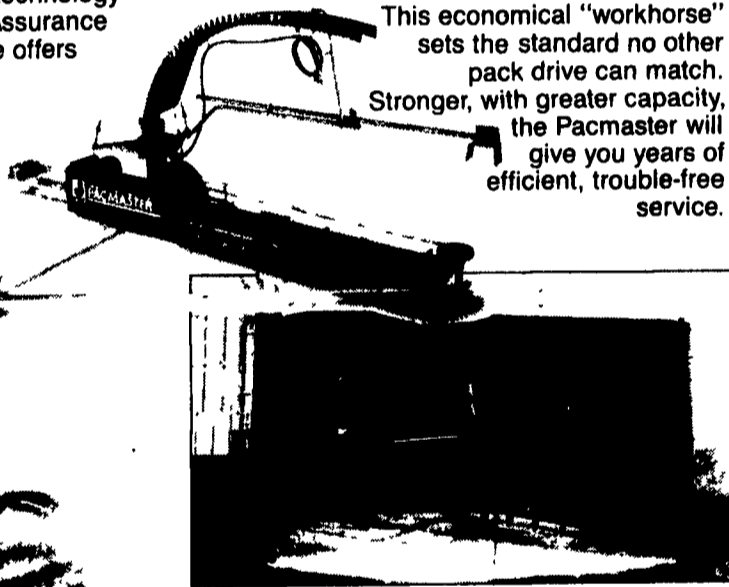
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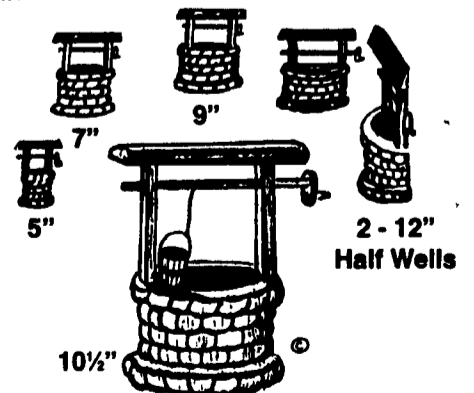
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