

Strawberry-Blood Orange Marmalade with Rosemary

Approximate Yield: six to seven 8-ounce jars. **Shelf Life:** 1 year

This excellent marmalade is gorgeous to behold, with its strips of orange rind shimmering in brick red jelly. The different ingredients come together perfectly into an exquisitely rich bouquet. It is a breathtaking use for early-season strawberries and is extremely versatile; breakfast toast, lunch sandwiches, tart fillings, and after-dinner cheese are but a few of its many delectable uses.

2 1/4 pounds hulled strawberries

1 1/2 pounds seeded Moro blood oranges, halved crosswise, each half cut into quarters lengthwise and sliced crosswise medium-thin

2 (8-inch) sprigs rosemary

2 pounds 10 ounces white cane sugar

2 to 4 ounces strained freshly squeezed lemon juice

Day 1

First, prepare the strawberry juice: Place the strawberries in a medium stainless-steel kettle and add enough cold water to just cover the tops of the fruit. Bring to a boil over high heat, then decrease the heat to a simmer. Cover and cook the fruit for 1 to 1½ hours, or until the berries are brown and shapeless and the liquid has become syrupy.

Strain the strawberry juice by pouring the hot fruit and liquid into a medium-fine-mesh strainer suspended over a heatproof storage container or nonreactive saucepan. Cover the entire setup well with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator to drip overnight.

While the strawberries are cooking, place the orange slices in a separate nonreactive saucepan with water to reach 1 inch above the tops. Cover tightly and let rest overnight at room temperature.

Day 2

Place a saucer with five metal teaspoons in a flat place in your freezer for testing the marmalade later. Rinse the rosemary well under cold water, pat it dry between two clean kitchen towels, and set aside.

Bring the pan with the orange slices to a boil over high heat, decrease the heat to medium, and cook, covered, at a lively simmer for 30 to 60 minutes, or until the fruit is very tender. If necessary, add a little more water during the cooking; the fruit should remain submerged throughout the cooking process.

While the orange slices are cooking, remove the plastic wrap from the strawberries and their juice and discard the berries. Strain the juice well through a very fine-mesh strainer to remove any lingering solids.

When the orange slices are ready, place them in a large mixing bowl with the sugar, cooked strawberry juice, and 2 ounces lemon juice, stirring well.

Taste, and slowly add a little more lemon juice if necessary. You should be able to taste the lemon juice, but it should not be overpowering. Keep adding lemon juice only until you are just able to detect its tartness in the mixture. Transfer the mixture to an 11- or 12-quart copper preserving pan or a wide nonreactive kettle.

Bring the mixture to a boil over high heat. Cook at a rapid boil until the setting point is reached; this will take a minimum of 35 minutes, but may take longer depending on your individual stove and pan. Initially, the mixture will bubble gently for several minutes; then, as more moisture cooks out of it and its sugar concentration increases, it will begin foaming. Do not stir it at all during the initial bubbling; then, once it starts to foam, stir it gently every few minutes with a heatproof rubber spatula. As it gets close to being done, stir it slowly every minute or two to prevent burning, decreasing the heat a tiny bit if necessary. The marmalade is ready for testing when its color darkens and its bubbles become very small.

To test the marmalade for doneness, remove it from the heat and carefully transfer a small representative half-spoonful to one of your frozen spoons. It should look shiny, with tiny bubbles throughout. Replace the spoon in the freezer for 3 to 4 minutes, then remove and carefully feel the underside of the spoon. It should be neither warm nor cold; if still warm, return it to the freezer for a moment. Tilt the spoon vertically to see whether the marmalade runs; if it does not run, and if its top layer has thickened to a jelly consistency, it is done. If it runs, cook it for another few minutes, stirring, and test again as needed.

When the marmalade has finished cooking, turn off the heat but do not stir. Using a stainless-steel spoon, skim off any surface foam and discard. Place the rosemary into the mixture and let steep for a few minutes off the heat. Stir and carefully taste the marmalade. Remove the sprigs or leave them in for another minute or two, keeping in mind that their flavor will be slightly milder once the marmalade has cooled. Using tongs, discard the rosemary. Pour the marmalade into sterilized jars and process according to the manufacturer's instructions.

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