

# It's Strawberry Season!

By Deb Landry

By the end of this month, strawberries will be growing everywhere in Maine and across the country.

There is nothing like fresh strawberries straight from the patch. My garden plants are loaded with blossoms and on a hike this weekend we came across a small patch of wild strawberries. This inspired me to buy some rhubarb at the farmers market, make plans with my daughter to go picking and dig out the strawberry recipes.

Each year we pack up the kids, camera, and sunscreen to gather fresh fruit at a reasonable price. The kids usually eat more than they pick but picking goes fast, especially if the strawberries are plump.

Last month in California, we drove by a roadside stand selling fresh strawberries and artichokes. They were so big that it only took a few to fill a pint. The rich deep color and the size made my mouth water. I couldn't wait to bite into one.

For a moment, I was home in Maine in the middle of a small farm field ready to sink my teeth into a strawberry half the size of my palm. To my dismay, it tasted nothing like what I was use to, no offense CA!

Size does matter, the smaller the better! From giant California berries to the wild Maine pea size strawberries, nothing is sweeter than and as good for you as this juicy fruit. Pack up the kids and head out for some good old fashion family memories.

For a farm near you, log on to [www.pickyourown.org](http://www.pickyourown.org).

Here is my quick and easy strawberry jam recipe. It's easy to make and the kids will enjoy helping. I always use Sure Jell powder products; they seem to work the best for me. Inside the package, you will find a variety of other jelly and jam recipes.

## My Favorite Strawberry Jam

Two cups crushed strawberries

4 cups sugar, measured into separate bowl

3/4 cup water

One (1.75-ounce) package Sure Jell Fruit Pectin

1. Rinse clean five (1-cup) plastic containers and lids with boiling water. Dry thoroughly.
2. Stem and crush strawberries thoroughly, 1 cup at a time. Measure exactly 2 cups prepared fruit into large bowl. Stir in sugar. Let stand 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Mix water and pectin in small saucepan. Bring to boil on high heat, stirring constantly. Continue boiling and stirring 1 minute. Add to fruit mixture; stir 3 minutes or until sugar is dissolved and no longer grainy. (A few sugar crystals may remain.)
4. Fill all containers immediately to within 1/2 inch of tops. Wipe off top edges of containers; immediately cover with lids. Let stand at room temperature 24 hours. Jam is now ready to use. Store in refrigerator up to 3 weeks or freeze extra containers up to 1 year. Thaw in refrigerator before using.
5. Also, check other recipes using jelly jars. They make great holiday gifts and there's nothing like the taste of summer on your toast on a cold winter day.