



Using, Storing and Preserving Plums



Prepared by:
Laurie Messing, Extension Educator

Michigan-grown plums are available mid-July through September.

Michigan Fresh: Using, Storing and Preserving Plums was first published in March 2015 and revised in May 2023.



Food Safety and Storage

- Pick or purchase plums that are not bruised or damaged.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Wash plums under cool running water. Do not use soap.
- Keep plums away from raw meat and meat juices to prevent cross-contamination.
- For best quality and to preserve nutrients, preserve no more than your family can consume in one year.

Yield

14 pounds	=	Canner load of 7 quarts
9 pounds	=	Canner load of 9 pints
56 pounds = 1 bushel	=	22-36 quarts, average 2 pounds per quart

Preparing and Using Syrups

Syrup type	Approx. % sugar	Measures of water and sugar				Fruits commonly packed in syrup (2)
		For 9-pt load (1)		For 7-qt load		
		Cups water	Cups sugar	Cups water	Cups sugar	
Very light	10	6½	¾	10½	1¼	Approximates natural sugar levels in most fruits and adds the fewest calories.
Light	20	5¾	1½	9	2¼	Very sweet fruit. Try a small amount the first time to see if your family likes it.
Medium	30	5¼	2¼	8¼	3¾	Sweet apples, sweet cherries, berries, grapes.
Heavy	40	5	3¼	7¾	5¼	Tart apples, apricots, sour cherries, gooseberries, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums.
Very heavy	50	4¼	4¼	6½	6¾	Very sour fruit. Try a small amount the first time to see if your family likes it.

(1) This amount is also adequate for a 4-quart load. (2) Many fruits that are typically packed in heavy syrup are excellent and tasteful products when packed in lighter syrups. The USDA recommends that lighter syrups be tried, since they contain fewer calories from added sugar.

This table is adapted from “Table 1. Preparing and Using Syrups” from *Selecting, Preparing and Canning Fruit* on the National Center for Home Food Preservation website at https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_02/syrups.html. That table was adapted from the USDA’s *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539). Revised 2015.

Using, Storing and Preserving Plums

How to Preserve

Canning

Quality: Select deep-colored, mature fruit of ideal quality for eating fresh or cooking. Plums may be packed in water or syrup.

Stem and wash plums. To can whole, prick skins on two sides of plums with a fork to prevent splitting. Freestone varieties may be halved and pitted. If you use syrup, prepare very light, light or medium syrup according to the “Preparing and Using Syrups” table.

Hot pack – Add plums to water or hot syrup and boil 2 minutes. Cover saucepan and let stand 20 to 30 minutes. Fill hot jars with hot plums and cooking liquid or syrup, leaving ½-inch headspace.

Raw pack – Fill hot jars with raw plums, packing firmly. Add hot water or syrup, leaving ½-inch headspace.

Remove air bubbles, wipe rims with clean paper towel, adjust headspace if needed, adjust lids and process. Recommended processing guidelines for canning plums in a boiling-water bath or a dial- or weighted-gauge pressure canner are given in the following tables.

Recommended process time (in minutes) for plums, halved or whole, in a boiling-water canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (in minutes) at altitudes of			
		0 - 1,000 ft.	1,001 - 3,000 ft.	3,001 - 6,000 ft.	Above 6,000 ft.
Hot or raw	Pints	20	25	30	35
	Quarts	25	30	35	40

Recommended process time (in minutes) for plums, halved or whole, in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (minutes)	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
			0 - 2,000 ft.	2,001 - 4,000 ft.	4,001 - 6,000 ft.	6,001 - 8,000 ft.
Hot or raw	Pints or quarts	10	6 lb.	7 lb.	8 lb.	9 lb.

Recommended process time (in minutes) for plums, halved or whole, in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (minutes)	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of	
			0 - 1,000 ft.	Above 1,000 ft.
Hot or raw	Pints or quarts	10	5 lb.	10 lb.

Let jars stand undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours, remove rings, wash jars, label, date and store. Food in jars that do not seal must be reprocessed in a clean jar with a new lid within 24 hours, refrigerated or frozen.

Lawn or garden questions?

Visit migarden.msu.edu.
Call toll-free 1-888-678-3464.

Using, Storing and Preserving Plums

Freezing

Preparation – Select firm, ripe fruit soft enough to yield to slight pressure. Sort and wash. Leave whole or cut in halves or quarters, and pit.

Syrup pack – Use cold 40-50 percent syrup, depending on tartness of fruit. For a better quality product, add ½ teaspoon (1500 mg) ascorbic acid per quart of syrup. To make the syrup, dissolve sugar in lukewarm water, mixing until the solution is clear. Chill syrup before using.

Use just enough cold syrup to cover the prepared fruit after it has been placed in the container (about ½ to ⅔ cup of syrup per pint).

Put plums directly into cold syrup in container, starting with ½ cup syrup to a pint container. Press fruit down and add syrup to cover. Leave ½- to 1½-inch headspace dependent on container type. To keep fruit under the syrup, place a small piece of crumpled parchment paper or other water-resistant wrapping material on top, and press fruit down into the syrup before sealing the container.

Seal, label, date and freeze.

Plum sauce – Boil well-ripened clingstone plums without water until soft; then remove pits and skins. Continue cooking the pulp and juice until it thickens to your desired consistency. Add 1 part sugar (with spices, if desired) to 4 parts plums.

Cool and package, leave ½- to 1½-inch headspace dependent on container type. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Syrups for Use in Freezing Fruits

Type of syrup	Percent syrup*	Cups of sugar **	Cups of water	Yield of syrup in cups
Very light	10%	½	4	4½ cups
Light	20%	1	4	4¾ cups
Medium	30%	1¾	4	5 cups
Heavy	40%	2¾	4	5½ cups
Very heavy	50%	4	4	6 cups

*Approximate

**In general, up to one-fourth of the sugar may be replaced by corn syrup or mild-flavored honey. A larger proportion of corn syrup may be used if a very bland, light-colored type is selected.

References

Andress, E., & Harrison, J. A. (2014). *So easy to preserve* (Bulletin 989). (6th ed.). University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

Complete guide to home canning. (2015). United States Department of Agriculture.

National Center for Home Food Preservation.

<http://nchfp.uga.edu/>

Find out more about Michigan Fresh at
canr.msu.edu/mi_fresh/.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Quentin Tyler, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. 1P-1R-05:2023-ASAP/Web-PA/BH WCAG 2.0 AA