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Figs: picking tips, facts and recipes: Great things to make from fresh figs

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This month's notes: July 2009: Strawberry season is ending in most of the U.S, especially in the South, just starting in New England and other cooler areas. DON'T MISS THEM! See this page for [strawberry picking tips](#), or [to make strawberry jam](#). And find a [Strawberry festival](#) nearby. Blueberries are ready to pick throughout the most of the U.S.! See this page for [a GREAT and easy blueberry pie recipe!](#) and [see this page for Blueberry Festivals!](#) Check out my [easy canning instructions/recipes](#), [canning equipment guide!](#) Also make your own ice cream - see [How to make ice cream](#) and [ice cream making equipment and manuals](#)



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Fig Facts and Picking Tips



Many Americans have never eaten a fresh fig. I blame fig newtons and dried figs - those are NOTHING like a fresh fig. A fresh fig tastes like a mix of a peach and a strawberry!

In the U.S., Figs typically peak from July through Frost in the South, and August and later in the North. Usually the trees produce a crop within a month, and then nothing for several months, so check your local farm to find out when they'll be in season. In the north, most trees only produce one crop per season. In order to produce good local Figs, producers depend on ideal spring and early summer weather conditions, and no late frosts.

How to know when a fig is ripe

Color - Figs come in all colors from yellow, brown, red to purple, black and others! So you need to know what color the ripe fig is. The most commonly grown figs, Brown Turkey and Celeste are a golden yellow as shown at left when ripe.

Texture - Ripe Figs Become soft like a peach when ripe, but they should not be mushy or fall apart!

Fig Picking Tips



Figs grown on low, open trees, with no thorns and soft leaves, so they're very easy to pick! The ripe figs will separate easily from the tree when you lift them upwards from their normal drooping position. The ripe figs definitely droop a bit and feel softer. Unripe figs are harder, more firmly attached and do not droop. Note the orange, drooping Celeste figs at left.



Figs must be picked ripe from the trees, since they do not ripen once picked. See the photo of unripe figs at left.

- . I have heard that some people are allergic to the fig latex, a milky white liquid produced by the fig tree and develop contact rashes. Just like with other latex allergies, if this applies to you be sure to wear long sleeves when you pick and wear the appropriate type of gloves when picking or handling figs!

Storing fresh figs

Figs won't last long at room temperature, but a mildly cool refrigerator will keep them several days.

Freezing Figs

Freeze within 12 hours of picking time, if possible. Prepare and freeze Figs only about 3 pints at one time. Then repeat the process until all Figs are frozen.

1. Make a medium sweetness syrup of
3 cups sugar
4 cups water
The figs will taste slightly sweeter than desired at this stage to be the proper flavor after freezing. Simply stir the sugar into the water to dissolve. No heating is necessary.
2. To the sugar syrup, add an citric/ascorbic add mixture bought at the grocery store (for example, "Fruit Fresh") and follow the directions on the package, generally adding about 1 teaspoon per batch. This is to help preserve color and flavor.
3. Wash the figs. remove the stems and any soft spots. Slice the figs about ¼-inch (1/2 cm) thick.
4. Pack the sliced figs into polyethylene containers, ziploc bags, or vacuum freezer bags, allowing room to add about 1/2 cup of sugar syrup, and allowing about 1/2 inch per pint expansion room. More room will be needed for larger containers. Pack the containers to force out as much air as possible since air dries out the figs when they freeze. Be sure to label and date containers.
5. Place containers as quickly as possible into the coldest part of your freezer, allowing room around the containers to promote fast freezing. Containers can be packed more economically after they are frozen solid, usually 24 hours.

When you are ready to eat them, thaw the frozen figs in the refrigerator in the container.

Fig Preserving and Recipes:

- [How to Make Homemade Fig Preserves and Fig Jam](#)
- [How to make fig-strawberry jam.](#)

- [How to Can Figs](#)
- [Making Candied figs](#)
- [Other fig recipes](#)

Common Fig Varieties and Uses

Variety	Fruit Color	Fruit Size	For Fresh Use	For Jams and Preserves
Alma	Greenish brown	Small	Very good	Good
Brown Turkey	Bronze (yellow/ brown)	Medium to large	Good	Excellent
Celeste	Lt. brown to violet	Medium	Very good	Excellent
Green Ischia	Bright green	Medium	Good	Good (seeds objectionable)
Hunt	Dull bronze with specks	Small to medium	Good	Excellent
Kadota	Bright greenish- yellow	Medium to large	Fair	Excellent
Magnolia	Bronze with white flecks	Medium	Fair	Excellent

Other variants are:

- five varieties of Celeste: giant, blue, golden, improved and regular.
- LSU gold and purple;
- Smith, which has a scarlet interior;
- Clement, a Mediterranean variety;
- Alma;

- . Hardy Chicago; and
- . Camelle.
- . More information: see [Figs 4 Fun](#): Said to be the largest database of information about figs (*Ficus carica*) that is available on the internet.

Growing tips

Fig trees are easily propagated through cuttings. In September or October, make a cutting and put it in a bucket with potting soil, or simply stick it in the ground and cover with mulch. One out of 10 will take, but once you've got a fig tree going, it's hard to kill. Protect it the first winter from frost with a deep mulch, and then it's on its own. After three years, it should start producing.

A reader suggests that the following method has a much higher rate of success:

Take a low-growing branch, about quarter to half inch (5 - 15 mm) diameter, and bury part in the soil. Put a stone or brick on top of the submerged section to stop it getting pulled out by wind or passing animals. After a year it will have rooted. Cut the parent branch and pot up or plant out the new plant.

Fig Preserving Directions

- . [Click here for my fully illustrated, easy fig jam directions!](#)
- . [How to can figs](#)
- . [Candied figs](#)
- . [Other fig recipes](#)

Frequently Asked Questions About Figs

1. **Q:** I don't have enough ripe figs to make a batch of jam yet - how do I keep the ones I've picked until I have enough to make jam? Can I make jam from frozen figs - if I use your method to freeze?

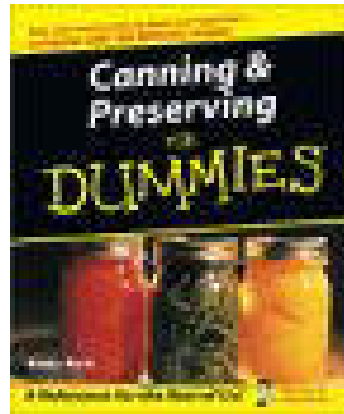
A: I just prepare them as if I were going to use them (in jam making or whatever)

by washing, then cutting the stems off and peeling them (I like them peeled), then I pack them in a ziploc bag and pop them in the freezer. A few weeks in the freezer like that till I accumulate enough to make jam, won't hurt them! I've keep them in the freezer as long as several months until I made jam!

2. Q. Is it possible to be allergic to figs? I get an itchy rash that looks like poison ivy after handling them.

A. Yes, others have reported allergic reactions to handling and eating figs. [See this scientific report on the subject](#). Skin reactions are more common after handling hot peppers and mangos ([see this page for more information](#)) but it is not unheard of with figs.

Canning books



Canning & Preserving for Dummies

by Karen Ward

Average Customer Review: ★★★★★

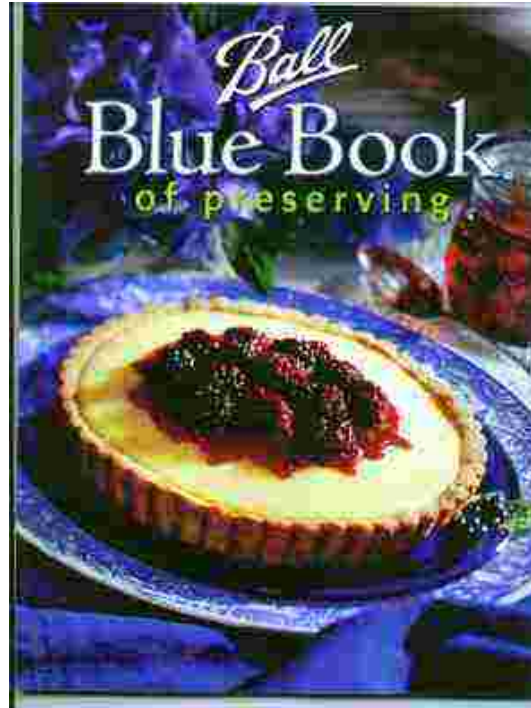
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The Ball Blue Book of Preserving

This is THE book on canning! My grandmother used this book when I was a child. It tells you in simple instructions how to can almost anything; complete with recipes for jam, jellies, pickles, sauces, canning vegetables, meats, etc. If it can be canned, this book likely tells you how! Click on the link below for more information and / or to buy (no obligation to buy)

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- * All the tools you need for hot waterbath canning - in one comprehensive set!
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- * Also includes canning rack, funnel, jar lifter, jar wrench, bubble freer, tongs and lid lifter.
- * A Kitchen Krafts exclusive collection.



This is the same type of standard canner that my grandmother used to make everything from applesauce to jams and jellies to tomato and spaghetti sauce. This complete kit includes everything you need and lasts for years: the canner, jar rack, jar grabber tongs, lid lifting wand, a plastic funnel, labels, bubble freer, and the bible of canning, the Ball Blue Book. It's much cheaper than buying the items separately. You'll never need anything else except jars & lids! To see [more canners, of different styles, makes and prices, click here!](#) For more information and current pricing:

[Click here for a larger photo, more information, pricing, ordering, etc.](#)

Average Customer Review: ★★★★★
Usually ships in 1-2 business days



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 - [ConsumerFraudReporting.org](#) - Information about identity theft, frauds and scams; how to report them and how to protect your identity.
 - [FitnessAndHealthScience.org](#) - Practical fitness, health and diet information that works.
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