



# Ways with Pears

Pears are usually plentiful in backyards and home orchards from late July through October but are not grown commercially in Louisiana.

## Varieties of Pears

Several varieties of pears grow well in Louisiana. The harder varieties, such as the Kieffer and Pineapple, or sand pear, are excellent for making preserves, pickles, relishes, marmalade, mincemeat, chutney and for drying. When properly ripened, these pears also become soft and sweet and can be eaten fresh and used for pies and cakes.

The large Orient, the LaConte with the reddish color, the Baldwin and similar varieties are dual purpose pears. They are soft, fine-grained, sweet and juicy when ripe. They are good for eating fresh and for canning, preserving and freezing.

The popular commercially grown Bartlett eating pear does not grow well in Louisiana.

## Nutritive Value

Pears have a refreshing, sweet flavor but are relatively low in calories. A medium-sized pear contains about 100 calories or less, depending on variety. One pear-half canned in juice has about 40 calories; in heavy syrup, about 60. They contribute small amounts of calcium, iron and niacin.

## Picking and Storing Pears

Unlike most fruits, pears must be picked from the tree before they ripen for best flavor and texture. Tree-ripened pears do not have the best quality. If left to ripen on the tree, pears become coarse and gritty. Pick pears when they are mature but still firm, and before they fall to the ground.

Buy fresh pears that are fairly firm but not hard. Undersized fruit that's not mature may shrink or shrivel during storage. Color is not always an indication of ripeness.

Cool pears immediately after picking if they are to be stored. The best temperature for cold storage is 30 degrees F. To ripen, keep pears in a cool, humid place (60-70 degrees) for a few days. Store in a brown paper bag, box or similar container. Dampen a small sponge or some cottonballs and tuck in the bag to provide humid conditions for storage and to prevent shriveling. A pear is ripe when it gives a little when you press gently near the stem end and on the sides.

When fully ripe, store in the refrigerator. They absorb odors easily during storage, however, and potatoes and certain other vegetables will give them an off-flavor. Pears become over-ripe and break down quickly at temperatures above 85 degrees F. A skillful handler can control the ripening process through storage temperature



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and have a continuous supply of good quality fruit for a long time.

## How much to use



- 1 pound of fresh pears = about 3 medium pears
- 1 pound of fresh pears = about 2 cups sliced pears
- 2 to 2 1/2 pounds fresh pears = 2 pints or 1 quart of canned pears
- 1 pound fresh pears = 1 pint frozen pears
- 4 quarts sliced pears (about 8 pounds)= 4 pints pear preserves
- 1 bushel (50 pounds) fresh pears = 16 to 25 quarts canned pears

## Using Pears

There are many ways to enjoy fresh pears – as a snack, low-calorie dessert, with a cheese tray or in delicious pies and cakes. They may be canned for salads and desserts or made into excellent preserves, pickles, mincemeat, chutney, marmalade, honey or jam, or dried for snacks and cookies. Pears may be frozen, but this method of preservation is less common.

## Pear Facts

- Pick pears when mature but before they fall to the ground.
- Pears darken quickly when cut surface is exposed to air.
- Place peeled pears in a mild salt solution (1 1/2 teaspoons salt per quart water) during preparation to prevent darkening.
- In canning pears, add ascorbic acid, a commercial color control mixture or lemon juice to the syrup to keep the bright, light color.
- For a pretty pear half, remove core from soft pears with the tablespoon from your set of metal measuring spoons.

## Pear Preserves

*Pear preserves are best made from firm-ripe fruit.*

- 4 quarts sliced pears**
- 2 cups water**
- 6 cups sugar**
- Lemon, sliced thinly**

Wash, peel pears, cut into quarters and core. Cut into thin slices. Put into a pan of lightly salted water to keep from turning dark during preparation. Put pears in a small amount of water, cover, bring to a boil and cook a short time until barely fork tender.

When pears are barely tender, remove from pan, leaving juice. Measure juice and make a heavy syrup using juice as all or part of the liquid. Add 6 cups sugar to 2 cups liquid, stir and heat slowly until sugar is dissolved. Add lemon slices, and bring syrup to a boil. Add precooked pears and keep syrup boiling on medium heat until preserves are clear and transparent and the syrup is the consistency of honey. This will take about 1 1/2 hours.

Do not stir, but occasionally lift gently from the bottom of the pan. Put preserves into hot sterilized jars to within 1/2 inch of top, wipe sealing edge clean and seal. Process preserves in a hot water bath at simmering temperature for 10 minutes.

*Yield: about 4 pints*

**Note:** Soft varieties do not need to be pre-cooked before adding to syrup. Most pear varieties make a red preserve; however, some varieties make a beautiful creamy yellow preserve.

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## Canned Pears

*a ready supply of fruit for desserts or salads year round.*



**Ripe pears** (about 15 - 18 lbs. needed for a 7-qt. canner load)

**Thin sugar syrup** (9 cups liquid; 2 1/2 cups sugar)

**Commercial fruit-fresh mix or lemon juice**

Pears that ripen for several days are easier to peel. Sort pears according to size and maturity. Wash, peel, cut into halves and core. To get a pretty pear half, remove core with the tablespoon of your metal measuring spoons.

Cover peeled pears immediately with lightly salted water to prevent darkening. Use 2 tablespoons of salt to a gallon of water. Precook hard varieties of pears, such as Kieffer, in water until barely fork tender. Make a thin syrup using the water pears are cooked in and sugar in the proportion of 1 cup sugar to 3 cups liquid. Cook pears 3 to 5 minutes in the syrup. Before packing, add a commercial mixture of ascorbic acid or lemon juice to the syrup to keep pears a bright, light color.

Pack hot pears in hot canning jars to within 3/4 inch of top. Pack in overlapping layers, core side down. Fill jars with hot syrup to within 1/2 inch of top. Remove air bubbles by running a spatula or table knife around the sides inside the jar.

Wipe sealing edge and threads clean, and adjust lids. Process in boiling waterbath canner; 20 minutes for pints and 25 minutes for quarts. When processing time is finished, remove immediately from water and cool.

Precook Baldwin and other soft varieties only in syrup, then pack.

## Cinnamon Pears

Add 2 sticks cinnamon and a few drops of red food color to each quart of syrup.



## Minted Pears

Add oil of peppermint and green food color, a drop at a time, until syrup is flavored and colored as desired. Cook pears in syrup 10 minutes before packing.

## Without Sugar

Use water instead of syrup for precooking and packing. You can use apple juice or white grape juice instead of syrup.

## Spiced or Pickled Pears



**4 quarts pears, peeled and cored**  
**1 pint water**  
**8 cups sugar**  
**1 quart vinegar, white**  
**2 1/2 sticks cinnamon, broken**  
**2 tablespoons whole allspice**  
**2 tablespoons whole cloves**

Wash, pears, peel, cut in half or quarter and core. Add 1 pint water to pears, cover and boil for 10 minutes. Measure water pears were cooked in. Add enough to make 2 quarts. Tie spices loosely in a thin cloth bag and pound lightly. Add sugar, vinegar and spices to water, and heat to boiling. Cover and simmer about 30 minutes. Add pears to boiling syrup and simmer until fork tender, about 20-25 minutes. Pack hot pears into clean, hot jars. Cover with boiling syrup to 1/2 inch of top. Wipe sealing edge, adjust lids, and process in boiling water bath for 20 minutes, pints and quarts. Make about 7 pints.



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## Pear Relish

4 quarts ground pears (hard variety)  
8 cups ground onions  
8 sweet green peppers, chopped  
2 hot red peppers, chopped  
2 1/2 teaspoons salt  
3 tablespoons dry mustard  
2 tablespoons allspice  
2 teaspoons cloves  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
2 teaspoons tumeric  
4 cups sugar  
2 quarts white vinegar

Peel and core pears; grind. Measure 4 quarts. Mix ingredients in order given and bring to a boil. Simmer 15 minutes. Pack into sterilized jars, wipe sealing edge and adjust caps. Process pint jars for 5 minutes in a boiling water bath canner.

## Pear Mincemeat... for pies and cookies

24 large hard pears  
2 (1 lb.) pkgs. seedless raisins  
6 cups sugar  
3 lemons  
1/2 cup vinegar  
  
1 tablespoon salt  
1 tablespoon cinnamon  
1 tablespoon cloves  
1 tablespoon grated nutmeg  
2 teaspoons ginger

Wash, peel and core pears. Squeeze lemons for juice. Grind pears, raisins and lemons with coarse blade of food chopper. Combine all ingredients. Cook until mixture is tender and thick, about 30 - 40 minutes. Pack into clean, hot pint jars, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Wipe sealing edge, adjust lids and process in boiling water canner for 10 minutes.

*Yield: about 8 pints.*

## Pear Chutney

3 cups cider vinegar  
2 pounds brown sugar  
6 pounds firm pears, cored,  
peeled and chopped  
2 medium onions, chopped  
2 cups golden raisins  
3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh  
ginger root or 1/2 cup diced  
preserved ginger  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
4 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground cloves  
4 teaspoons mustard seed

In a large kettle, bring vinegar and sugar to a boil and stir until sugar dissolves. Add all remaining ingredients and bring back to a gentle boil.

Lower heat and simmer, uncovered, over very low heat, stirring occasionally. Chutney should be thick and will take 1 1/2 hours or longer to reach proper consistency. An asbestos pad under the cooking pot will help prevent relish from scorching. Pour into sterilized jars and seal. Process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes. When cool, check for a good seal and store in a cool, dark place.

*Yield: about 12 pints.*

## Sugarless Pear "Jam"

4 cups pears, cooked  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 pkg. (1 3/4 oz) powdered pectin  
8 - 10 pkg. (1-gram each) of  
powdered artificial sweetener  
(or about 2 teaspoons liquid sweetener)  
2-3 drops red food color

Prepare pears as for canning; precook in water to cover until tender. Mash (a potato masher works well). Put in a large pan or kettle, and stir in juice

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and pectin. Place on high heat and stir constantly, bringing to a full boil that cannot be stirred down. Boil 1 minute. Remove from heat. Add artificial sweetener. Stir for 2 minutes to mix thoroughly. Two or 3 drops of red food color improve the appearance.

The above amounts are good guides, but you may wish to sweeten to taste.

Pour into hot sterilized jars or freezer containers and seal. Store in refrigerator or freezer, because without a high concentration of sugar, the jam will spoil at room temperature. The jam can be processed in a hot water-bath at simmering temperature for 15 minutes and should keep for a reasonable length of time in a cool place.

## Freezing Pears

Select full-flavored pears that are firm ripe. Wash, peel, core and slice. Place slices in boiling water for 1 to 3 minutes, depending on thickness of slices. Drain and cool. Pack in freezer containers and cover with a medium sugar syrup. Leave 1/2 inch headspace. Seal and freeze at 0 degrees F.

Medium Syrup: Use 1 cup sugar to 1 1/3 cups water. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Add 3/4 teaspoon crystalline ascorbic acid to each quart syrup, or use a commercial color control according to directions on label.

Serve when barely thawed (still with ice crystals).

## Freezing Without Sugar

Prepare fruit as for canning. Rinse from saltwater solution, and pack into freezing container. Cover 2 cups of prepared fruit with a mixture of 1 cup water, 2 one-gram packages of powdered artificial sweetener or 1/2 teaspoon liquid sweetener, and 1/2 teaspoon commercial color control.

Leave 1/2 inch headspace. Seal airtight. Freeze. Use when barely thawed as fresh fruit, in salads, etc.

## Pear Streusel Pie



4 cups peeled and sliced pears  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1 tablespoon margarine  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/8 teaspoon mace  
1 tablespoon cornstarch  
1 tablespoon water  
1 pie crust, unbaked

### Streusel topping:

1/4 cup brown sugar, firmly packed  
1/2 cup flour  
2/3 cup coconut  
1/4 cup margarine

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Combine pear slices, sugar, lemon juice, margarine, salt and mace in saucepan. Bring to a boil and cook over medium heat for about 8 minutes.

Lift pears into pastry shell with a slotted spoon. Mix cornstarch and water until smooth. Add to remaining syrup. Bring to a boil; cook until thickened, stirring constantly. Pour syrup over pears. Bake for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, mix brown sugar, flour and coconut. Mix in margarine with a pastry blender or fork until crumbly. Sprinkle on top of pie; bake an additional 5 to 10 minutes, until topping is golden brown. Serves 8. Each serving provides 407 calories, 62 gm carbohydrate, 17.5 gm fat.



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## Hearty Pear Breakfast Muffins

- 2 ripe pears
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup skim milk
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 egg (or egg substitute)
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 cup flour
- 3/4 cup whole wheat flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup old-fashioned oatmeal

Peel and chop pears to measure 1 1/2 cups. Combine pears, sugar, milk, oil, egg and raisins. In a separate bowl, sift together remaining ingredients except oats. Stir in oats; add liquid mixture and stir just until blended. Spray 16 muffin cups with cooking spray. Bake in a preheated oven at 375 degrees F about 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm. Makes about 16 muffins. Each muffin provides 136 calories, 23.3 gm carbohydrate, 4.2 gm fat, 26.8 mg cholesterol.

## Fresh Pear Cake

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup oil
- 3 eggs (or egg substitute)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg or mace
- 3 cups chopped raw pears
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Combine sugar and oil. Add eggs, one at a time, mixing well. Stir in vanilla. Sift together dry ingredients; add to sugar-egg mixture, mixing well. Stir in pears and pecans. Batter will be stiff.

Pour into a well-greased and floured tube pan. Bake in a preheated oven at 375 degrees F about 1 hour, or until done. Cool about 5 minutes and remove from pan. Freezes well. Serves 16. Each serving provides 359 calories, 43.3 gm carbohydrate, 19.4 gm fat, 39.8 mg cholesterol.



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