

Red Currant Jelly

7 cups fresh red currants, stemmed
1 2/3 cups sugar
6 fresh sage leaves

Prepare the currant juice: Bring the currants and 1 cup water to a simmer in a covered wide-bottomed stockpot. Cover and bring to a simmer. Mash the berries and cook over medium-low heat for 10 minutes. Uncover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 5 more minutes. Rinse a jelly bag or a large square of cheesecloth (in 5 layers) with hot water. Squeeze dry and use to line a colander set over a large bowl. Pour the currant mixture into the colander and let drain for at least 5 hours. Do not press.

Make the jelly: Place two small (nonplastic) saucers in the freezer. Add the sugar and sage to the strained liquid and transfer it to a wide-bottomed stock pot. Bring it to a boil over medium-high heat, skimming off the foam, until the mixture reaches 220° F -- 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and test the consistency by placing a teaspoonful onto the chilled saucer. Return the plate to the freezer until the liquid is cold. Run your finger through the center to test if the mixture sets up like jelly. If it does not gel, continue to cook a few more minutes and repeat the test. Pick out the sage leaves and pour the jelly into clean jelly jars. Let cool. Store refrigerated jelly for up to 1 month.

Currant jelly is a classic. Lightly sweetened and versatile, it can be spread on toast or brushed as a glaze on grilled shrimp. It will also accommodate an herbal note, such as sage, making it a suitable glaze for chicken, or for whisking into a sweet-and-sour vinaigrette.