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## How to Make Homemade Apple Butter



You think making and canning your own apple butter is difficult? Well, it used to be! Until crock pots and slow cookers came along!

Now, it's easy! Here's how to do it, complete instructions in easy steps and completely illustrated. The apple butter will taste MUCH better than anything you've ever had from a store.

Prepared this way, the jars have a shelf life of 18 months to 2 years, and require no special attention. A side benefit is that your house will smell wonderful while it is cooking - much better than potpourri!

### Ingredients and Equipment

Yields about 9 - 10 pints

- 9 quarts of Applesauce (See step 1 and 2)
- 2 tablespoons of ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon of allspice
- 4 cups sugar
- Jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Lid lifter (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sterilize them. (\$2 at WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores)
- 1 Crock pot (slow cooker) 6 quart size (if your crockpot is smaller, just reduce the ingredients proportionately)
- Large spoons and ladles
- 1 Canner (a huge pot to sterilize the jars of apple butter after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at WalMart (seasonal item))
- Ball jars (Publix, WalMart carry them - about \$8 per dozen quart jars including the lids and rings)

## Apple Butter Recipe and Directions

### Step 1 - Make unsweetened applesauce!



That's right, apple butter starts with applesauce! You can use store bought applesauce, but the apple butter won't taste nearly as good. So if you haven't made some applesauce yet start here with [how to make applesauce](#). Otherwise continue to step 2.

### Step 2 - Fill the crock pot

Fill the crock pot to within an inch of full with applesauce, mine takes about 5.5 quarts. Now, you CAN do this using a regular large pot on very low heat on the stove, but the crockpot works much better, because its heat is very low. I've never had a batch burn in the crockpot.

### Step 3 -Add the spices

Add:

- 2 tablespoons of ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon of allspice
- 2 cups sugar - In place of sugar, you can use an equivalent amount of Splenda (sucralose) OR 1 twelve ounce can of frozen concentrated fruit juice (preferably a neutral juice, like grape or apple). You can skip the sweeteners entirely, too; but it loses a lot of the richness of flavor, in my opinion.



## Step 4 - Cook the Apple butter

Set the crock pot on low or medium heat.

Cover it loosely or use a large pot splatter-guard. It will spatter as it boils slowly, so I also cover nearby surfaces with towels. You don't want to seal it tightly because you want the steam to escape so it can reduce in volume and thicken. A visitor suggests, take a couple of butter knives, and lay them across the top of the crock pot. They are parallel and located about 2/3 of the way out from the center. Then put the lid on these supports, leaving it "covering" the pot and keeping the splatters under control, but, leaving a good gap for steam to escape.



Leave it to cook for 6 - 12 hours. How long depends on the size and power of your crockpot, and how thick you like it, If you want to stir it occasionally, that's fine but not necessary. I let mine go overnight.

It will reduce in volume by about half overnight. **As it cooks down (the next morning), add the remaining applesauce (about 2 or 3 quarts) and 2 more cups of sugar or other sweetener as described above.** Then let it cook a couple of hours more to mix the flavors.

## Step 5 - Wash the jars and lids

Now's a good time to get the jars ready, so you won't be rushed later. The dishwasher is fine for the jars, the water bath processing will sterilize them as well as the contents! If you don't have a dishwasher, you can wash the containers in hot, soapy water and rinse, then sterilize the jars by boiling them 10 minutes, and keep the jars in hot water until they are used.



Leave the jars in the dishwasher on "heated dry" until you are ready to use them. Keeping them hot will prevent the jars from breaking when you fill them with the hot apple butter.

Put the lids into a pan of boiling water for 5 minutes, and use the magnetic "lid lifter wand" to pull them out.

## Step 6 - Blend the apple butter (optional)



You want a smooth, creamy texture, right? The easiest way is to use a hand-held drink blender. It does a great job of making it smooth. You can also put it into a regular blender, but if you are going to do that, you might want to blend the apple sauce before you put it in the crock pot (it will be much thicker afterwards and won't move in a regular blender). Another visitor says running it through a food mill with a fine screen or through a sieve works, too.

### Tips:

- **Too thick?** if the apple butter cooks down too much or is too thick for your liking, just add a little bit of apple juice and blend it in.
- **Not thick enough?** Just let it cook some more, with the lid off so the steam can escape!

## Step 7 - Fill and seal the jars

If the crockpot isn't keeping the apple butter boiling hot, you will need to briefly return the butter to the stove to get it hotter. It varies from crockpot to crockpot. I find that if I set my crockpot on high for the 15 minutes before I fill the jars and stir frequently, it gets it boiling.

Fill them to within 1/4 inch of the top, wipe any spilled apple butter of the top, seat the lid and tighten the ring around them.



## Step 8 - Process the jars

Process means put them in the canner and keep them covered with at least 2 inches of water and boiling. if you are at sea level (up to 1,000 ft) boil pint jars for 5 minutes and quart jars for 10 min. If you are at an altitude of 1,000 feet or more, see the chart below. **Even though these times are right from the USDA, I usually tend to err on the side of safety and let mine go for 15 minutes; there's no harm in going longer.**

| Recommended process time for Apple Butter in a boiling-water canner. |              |                              |                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Jar Size                                                             |              | Process Time at Altitudes of |                |
|                                                                      | 0 - 1,000 ft | 1,001 - 6,000 ft             | Above 6,000 ft |
| Half-pints or Pints                                                  | 5 min        | 10                           | 15             |
| Quarts                                                               | 10           | 15                           | 20             |

## Step 9 - Done



Lift the jars out of the water and let them cool without touching or bumping them in a draft-free place (usually takes overnight) You can then remove the rings if you like.

## Other Equipment:

From left to right:

1. Jar lifting tongs  
to pick up hot jars
2. Lid lifter  
- to remove lids from the pot  
of boiling water (sterilizing )
3. Lid  
- disposable - you may only  
use them once
4. Ring  
- holds the lids on the jar until after  
the jars cool - then you don't need them
5. Canning jar funnel  
- to fill the jars

