

MATERIALS FOR SCHOOLS

The raw materials (ingredients) for preparing preserves are fruit, sugar, pectin and in some cases lemon juice. The fruit reaches the plant already washed, cleaned and ready for use.

Here it is kept in a cold store at a temperature of -20°C until it is required for use. The cold helps to preserve all the nutritious properties of the fruit (sugars, vitamins, mineral salts) as well as its sensorial qualities (colour, taste, aroma) up to when it is used. This allows us also to produce all the flavours the market requires in any given season of the year, even if fresh fruit is not available at that particular time.

While still frozen the fruit is spread out on a specially designated table where it is checked to ensure that it is clean and wholesome. Any small leaves, dirt, or parts that are over or under ripe are eliminated with the utmost care and attention.

At this point the fruit is poured into specially designated cooking pans/mixers where it thaws and, along with sugar, becomes a hot homogeneous mass.

This semi-finished product is then transferred, through closed pipes, at the bottom of the cooking pans, to the real heart of the plant, which consists of “boules”, that is, vacuum concentrators. These “boules” exploit a principle of physics: the temperature at which any liquid boils depends on pressure. Inside the “boules” a vacuum is created (pressure is very low) and this allows the liquid to boil at temperatures around 60°C . What is more, large exhaust fans rapidly eliminate the steam that forms inside. All this leads to concentration (that is, part of the water naturally contained in the fruit is eliminated and the product reaches the right sugar level) while best maintaining the nutritional value, colour, aroma and taste of the fruit.

In home-made jams this concentration corresponds to long cooking times since in ordinary pans the jam is boiled at 100°C . This explains why home-made jam is often less attractive in its appearance and taste even though the best fruit is used.

When the product has reached the right level of concentration, which for our preserves means 45% total sugar, pectin is added and, for some flavours, lemon juice too. Pectin is used to ensure that the jam sets properly. It is a natural ingredient, extracted from fruit, especially from the external layers of apples and citrus fruit.

The jam, still hot, is now ready to be bottled. From the “boules” it is transferred to a large steel vat, and then into a dosing machine which puts the right quantity of jam into each jar.

Other machines on the production line close the jars with a metal lid and weigh them, automatically eliminating any jar that is underweight.

The closed jars now pass through a pasteurisation- cooling tunnel where they are sprayed with hot water to ensure that they will be preserved correctly for a long period of time. In this phase too the heat the product undergoes is kept under control and limited to what is strictly necessary to ensure safe preservation. Fortunately the sugar in the jam and the natural acidity of the fruit help to obtain long preservation of the product which means it is not necessary to add preservatives or sterilise jars at high temperatures as is the case with other products such as tinned tuna fish or meat, vegetables etc.

The jars come out of the tunnel already cooled and ready for labelling. Along the production line the jars undergo a further control: a special sensor checks that the metal lid is perfectly hermetically sealed and any jars that might be unsafe are eliminated.

At this point the jars go to the packing department where a machine labels them and indicates on each jar the use-by date and the lot number (which identifies the production date). The jars are then wrapped in a plastic film or boxed and stored ready to be dispatched.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Are marmalade and jam the same thing?

No, a preserve can be called marmalade only if citrus fruit (oranges, lemons etc) is used. All other flavours (apricots, peaches, blueberries ...) are called jam.

What does “extra” jam mean?

To be defined “extra”, jam must have at least 45% fruit and preservatives, artificial colour and aromas may not be used in its preparation. Fruit purées cannot be used, but only fruit pulp and/or fruit pieces.

What makes VIS extra jams different from others?

We use abundant fruit (up to 75%) in our jams and little sugar, and we choose our ingredients with great care.

Our fruit is top quality and we avoid using industrial pulp and purées, preferring good whole fruit or fruit pieces.

This allows us to keep the quality of what we use under control.

Moreover, we use only ordinary sugar (sucrose), the same as is used at home, instead of using other sweeteners which are cheaper but not so good, like glucose for example.

Which flavours are the favourites with Italian consumers?

In Italy the best known and most widely sold flavours are apricot, strawberry, peach and cherry.

Vis, as well as producing these classical tastes, is specialised in preparing excellent jams with wildberries (blueberries, blackberries, red currents etc) as well as real specialities such as quince, elder and chestnut preserves.