

Hanukkah Cooking: Apple-Pear Sauce

Jeffrey Yoskowitz: Applesauce is a great way to utilize bruised or imperfect fruit. The variety of apple doesn't matter too much; the sweeter the apple, the sweeter the sauce. This recipe also calls for pears, which provide natural sweetness, as well as apple juice or cider, which adds a deeper and sweeter flavor. (But water is a fine substitute for juice or cider—it means one less item to purchase, and depending on how I'm consuming my applesauce, I sometimes prefer it a little less sweet.)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds baking apples (about 6 medium), such as McIntosh, peeled, cored, and quartered (If you have a food mill, simply quarter your unpeeled apples and pears—no need to core them.)
- 2 pounds sweet pears (about 5 medium), such as Bartlett, peeled, cored, and quartered
- ½ cup apple juice, apple cider, or water
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 to 4 tablespoons maple syrup or sugar (optional)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, combine the apple and pear quarters, apple juice, and cinnamon sticks and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 30 to 40 minutes. The apples will soften and puff up a bit as the heat draws out their liquid. When you can smush the fruit by pressing on it with a spoon, it has finished cooking.
2. Turn off the heat and remove the cinnamon sticks. Mash the mixture with a potato masher or an improvised masher (an empty jar works well). For a smooth applesauce, puree using an immersion blender or food processor. (If you have a food mill, run the fruit through the food mill into a large bowl instead of mashing or pureeing.)
3. If you'd like your sauce sweeter, stir in the maple syrup or sugar (start with 1 tablespoon and add more if needed). Stir in the lemon juice, if using, which adds a bit of tartness to balance out the sweetness. Let the sauce cool.
4. Serve at room temperature. The sauce will keep in the refrigerator for about a month. If storing for later use, transfer to an airtight container and freeze. This apple-pear sauce freezes and cans well, so do not hesitate to double the recipe and save some for later use. Makes 5-6 cups.