



"Pavate!"- Italian Plum Jam with Star Anise

Makes 3 cups

Ingredients

- 2 lbs chopped Italian plums (aka Damson plums--dark purple peels, small and oval shaped with yellow green pulp)
- 1 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup granulated sugar
- 3 whole dried star anise blossoms
- 3 --2-inch strips x $\frac{1}{2}$ inch strips of lemon zest

Instructions:

After washing the fruit, I prepare the plums by cutting each in half, removing the center seed and then cutting into half again to make quarters. The stone in the middle pulls away easily from the flesh. You can substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ of the plums with halved red seedless grapes like they sometimes do in Israel.

Combine quartered plums, sugar, strips of lemon zest and star anise blossoms. Stir together and let the mixture sit in a sauce pan covered for at least an hour, or until the fruit has gotten quite syrupy. Remove two of the star anise blossoms and all the lemon peel.

Put the mixture in a medium-sized sauce pan and place over medium high heat. Bring to a slight boil and cook for 20-30 minutes on medium heat, stirring every five minutes until the jam bubbles and thickens. At first it will look very watery. You can test it by seeing if it will stay put on a spoon or passes the frozen plate test*. The jam should be a dark ruby colored.

I don't can the jam; I just put it into clean jars and refrigerate. I serve it on my seeded [crackers](#) with spreadable goat cheese topped with just a dollop of the jam, and add thin slices of ripe pears or concord grapes to the plate. I love to stir this delectable treat into plain yogurt, slather it along with almond butter onto thick bread for a fancy "AB&J", spoon it on top of challah French toast with some plain Greek yogurt, or even heat and serve over vanilla bean ice cream.

I have to laugh when I tell you I don't can the jam...funny for a girl who loves to use her pressure cooker for soups, risotto, beans...but I just never got into canning. So even if you are not a jam maker, give this a try while the Italian plums are plentiful at Farmer's markets. It keeps three weeks refrigerated or it can be frozen for up to a year.

As an aside, I often buy pounds of these Damson plums (or harvest them from a friend's tree) and freeze them once they are quartered. I then use them throughout the year.

*The Frozen Plate test: Put two small glass or porcelain coffee saucers in the freezer while you are boiling the preserves. When you think the batch might be finished, put about a teaspoon of the jam on the one of the frozen plates and return to the freezer . After two minutes, take the saucer out of the freezer and use your index finger to push through the jam. There should be a slight film on top that "wrinkles up" as you push. If it's not ready yet, boil the preserves for a few more minutes and repeat with the second frozen plate.