

Fruit Salad

by Madeline Ashby

as featured in *Betty's Summer Surprise Fruit Dessert*

This is a recipe for a lovely, versatile fruit dessert that is easy to make even during hard times. Prepared as written, it serves 8-10 people.

Note that this recipe requires a minimum of 4 hours chilling time before it is ready to serve.

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Ingredients

- About 4 C mixed fruit of your choice (see recipe notes)
- 1 C lightly-packed brown sugar
- 2 C full-fat sour cream

Supplies

- An apron, or a shirt you don't mind staining. (Don't wear white.)
 - A non-reactive 9x13 dish (see recipe notes), and space in the fridge for it to chill
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Instructions

Prep

- If you're using fresh fruit, wash it.
- If you're using canned fruit, drain it.
- If you're using frozen fruit, thaw and drain it.

Step One

Prepare the fruit mixture. Slice, peel, pit, core, and otherwise prepare your fruit as you would for a fruit salad. If you're using grapes, cherries, or similarly small fruits, cut them in half. Add all the fruit into the 9x13" dish.

Step Two

Macerate the fruit. Maceration is the process by which sugar draws liquid out of fruit, softening the fruit and soaking it in its own syrup. This is easy to accomplish: sprinkle brown sugar over the top of the fruit, then give a gentle stir or toss to coat.

Step Three

Top with full-fat sour cream in an even, generous layer.

Step Four

Chill. Literally and figuratively. Cover the salad, put it in the fridge, and do nothing for at least 4 hours. During that time, the sugar will draw liquid out of the fruit and form a flavorful syrup.

Serve

Gently mix and portion into bowls. If your end-result is thin, use a ladle; if it's thick, use a serving spoon. Top with a sprinkle of cinnamon.

Recommended substitutions and modifications

- **Serving dish size.** This recipe calls for a 9"x13" dish, but you can use a different pan or a large bowl. What matters is that you can fit all 4 cups of fruit plus the creamy topping, and that it will fit in your refrigerator.
- **Non-reactive materials.** Glass, Pyrex, Corningware or Corelle, stainless steel, ceramic, porcelain, and enamel are all non-reactive. Do not use aluminum, copper, cast iron, or uranium glass. (Don't look up "uranium glass," right now. If you do, you won't finish this project.)
- **Fruit recommendations.** You can use any combination of fruit you like for this recipe. Firmer-fleshed fruits, like apples and strawberries, will deliver a consistency similar to a very well-dressed fruit salad. Softer-fleshed fruits, like

peaches and kiwis, will release more liquid and deliver a consistency closer to a rich chilled soup. Resist the desire to use melon, which does not respond well to maceration. Melon is for funerals anyway.

- **Fresh fruit combinations to try** (all quantities are approximate)
 - **Spring.** $\frac{1}{3}$ C kumquats, $1\frac{2}{3}$ C strawberries, 1 C pineapple, 1 C apple
 - **Summer.** 1 C nectarine, 1 C mango, 1 C blueberries, 1 C apricots
 - **Winter.** $1\frac{1}{2}$ C figs, $1\frac{1}{2}$ C pears, $\frac{1}{4}$ C cranberries, and $\frac{3}{4}$ C persimmons (use Fuyu persimmons, the firm tomato-shaped ones). Grate nutmeg over the topping if you want to be fancy.
- **Canned fruit.** Check your cabinets for cling peaches, mandarin segments, pineapple chunks. We all have hidden resources. You may be surprised at what you find. If you find these things, make sure to drain them before use.
- **Frozen.** Frozen fruit will work well for this recipe, but may produce a softer, more soupy final result. Thaw and thoroughly drain frozen fruit before using it; if using frozen berries, consider saving the juice that drains off for use in a spritz to serve alongside the dessert.
- **Sugar alternatives.** The sugar in this recipe plays an important role in the process of maceration. Sugar is hygroscopic — it attracts water, and when it's in contact with fruit, it draws the liquid out of that fruit. The result is a softer, sweeter fruit in a sweet, intensely flavored syrup. Because of this process, your options for alternative sweeteners are more limited than usual.
 - You can use any kind of sugar - brown, granulated, powdered, whatever. Darker sugars will give you a more rich and complex flavor, while lighter and finer ones will give you a more intense sweetness.
 - Natural liquid sweeteners like honey and maple syrup will work just as well as a more 'dry' sugar; be sure to toss or mix thoroughly so all the fruit is coated thoroughly.
 - Reports on how well artificial sweeteners macerate fruit seem to be highly variable. You may need to lightly crush your fruit to successfully macerate using aspartame- and saccharin-based sweeteners. Artificial sweeteners tend to be much sweeter by volume than sugars, so consider cutting down the ratio of sweetener to fruit considerably; it's probably a good idea to run a small test-batch ahead of time to make sure the sweetness isn't overpowering. **Remember that artificial sweeteners are toxic to household pets, even in small quantities.**

- **Sour cream alternatives.** Good substitutes include greek yogurt, coconut yogurt, creme fraiche, and whipped topping.
 - **Step up the nutrients.** Chia seeds and hemp hearts will increase the fiber and protein content while adding textural interest. You can also stir greens powder, protein powder, or collagen into the sour cream topping; these are especially good ideas if this dish is likely to be most of what you eat in a day.
 - **Scale it up.** To make multiple pans at once, simply scale up the quantities of fruit and sugar; macerate for the same amount of time before assembling and chilling.
 - **Scale it down.** To make individual servings, macerate ½C of fruit with ⅓C brown sugar and top with a few generous spoonfuls of sour cream. If you assemble a bowl, mug, or jar before going to bed, it will make a lovely breakfast in the morning. Gailey really enjoys this version with Greek yogurt instead of sour cream, and a sprinkle of granola on top.
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Don't forget: care for yourself and the people around you. Believe that the world can be better than it is now. Never give up.