

QUINCE PASTE

1. Cut up the quinces roughly, discarding only bad bits, stalks and (optionally) pips. Add a very little water (around 10% by weight) and cook until soft. [Ideally, use a dish with a tight lid that will go on a flame and in the oven; start over a flame, and once boiling transfer to a pre-heated oven at gas mark 4 for about 45 minutes.]

When cooked, put through a mouli sieve.

2. Weigh the quince puree and put with 60% of its weight in sugar in a jam pan. Simmer for 30 minutes with constant stirring. [*Simmer gently - you must keep stirring, and if it boils too fiercely it will tend to splatter like a volcano, so it may be wise to take precautions.*]

After the 30 minutes, transfer fairly quickly to shallow tins lined with baking/greaseproof paper. Aim for a uniform thickness of about 2 cm (3/4 of an inch).

3. Leave somewhere dry, preferably warm (e.g. an airing cupboard), for about a week. As it dries, it will lose about a third in thickness and weight.

During this time, the paste should be turned several times (e.g. daily).

4. Once thoroughly dry it can be cut into small pieces, into squares using a sharp knife, or decorative shapes using biscuit or hors d'oeuvres cutters.

Notes

Recipe adapted from Elisabeth Luard's European Peasant Cookery.

It's best to make a fair quantity - several kilos if you have enough quinces and a large enough jam pan - as the exercise is fairly time-consuming and messy.

The resulting quince puree keeps well in the freezer, and can be used to make other recipes, (e.g., with sugar syrup and lemon juice to make quince sorbet).

It should not be left too long in contact with metal, so if metal tins are used turn the first time as soon as it is reasonably solid (next morning?). After the first turning, it is easy to keep it between two layers of greaseproof paper on a shelf or board.

Kept in a cool dry place it will last for months. [NOT in an air-tight container - that's asking for condensation and mould; I keep it in layers in a cardboard shoe box.]

QUINCE MARMALADE

Put the fruit into a preserving pan and cover with water. Simmer till the fruit is soft enough to pierce with a thin skewer. Allow to cool, then lift the fruit out and peel and core it, cutting the flesh of the fruit into small chunks; put the latter aside.

Return the peel and cores to the same water, and boil until reduced by a third; strain this through a cloth.

Put fruit, strained juice, and sugar equal in weight to the fruit into the preserving pan and cook until the juice reaches setting point. Put into warm clean jam jars.

Notes

Recipe adapted from Elisabeth David's French Provincial Cooking. Note that this is the original marmalade! The word comes from 'marmelo', the Portuguese word for quince.

With small quinces, the first part of this recipe is very tedious. An alternative is to peel and core the fruit at the start, and cook the fruit separately from the peel and cores.

QUINCE RECIPES

Quinces are like hard apples. The fruit can be used in any recipe for apple pies or similar, as long as you bear in mind that the quinces will need much more cooking - perhaps 2 or 3 times as long as apples. Or you can just cook quince slices on their own; I like them with coffee ice cream.

Similarly, quinces can be cooked like baked apples. This was apparently Sir Isaac Newton's favourite pudding, but I don't recommend it for small quinces.

Here are a couple of more detailed recipes. Note that when slicing quinces, you may find a brownish layer just under the skin; if so, cut this layer out and put it in the compost.

Jane Grigson's Fruit Book has an excellent chapter on quinces, including another dozen recipes.

This leaflet can be found at:

www.mollison.org/quincerecipes.pdf