

Joe's berry and mint gelato

Making gelato is fun, tasty and refreshing. I have never met a person who said they did not like gelato. The best time to make gelato is in the summer when there are lots of different varieties of fresh fruits available at the market. For the best gelato, use fruit that is fully or beyond ripened to get that extra flavour from the fruit. Alternatively, many department stores and delis sell packets of freshly frozen fruits such as berries and mangoes or you can buy tins containing passionfruit pulp. Be creative and adventurous and try a combination of fruits or combine some with exotic herbs or spices because no matter the end product, it's always delicious and will never be wasted. How much gelato you want to make will dictate the type of gelato machine you should buy. The basic machines cost under \$100 and allow you to make a small amount (around 1 litre per day), while a \$400 machine will have a compressor for cooling the gelato pot so you can churn out around 1 litre per 40 minutes. The semi- professional machines cost over \$1000 and these just do a much better job. I own and always recommend to my friends to buy the gelato machine with a cold compressor.

1. **Making the sugar syrup base.** Add 250 ml of water and 220 g of caster sugar to a small saucepan. Stir over low heat until the sugar dissolves then bring to the boil and cook for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and cool in a sink partially filled with cold tap water. Once cooled, store syrup in refrigerator for at least 2 hours or longer so that it is nice and cold. *(note: this sugar syrup can be used for the base for all fruit based flavoured gelato).*
2. **Making the fruit puree.** Place 500 g of fresh (or frozen) berries and 4 mint leaves into a food processor (or use a hand stick blender) and puree until smooth. Add the sugar syrup and blend again briefly. If you don't like the texture of the seeds in your gelato, then push berry mix through a sieve to remove them. *(note: You can substitute berries for other seasonal fruits using the same quantity).*

Making the gelato: Turn on the gelato machine and allow enough time for the cold compressor to cool down the stainless steel pot. Set the timer to around 40 minutes, pour the mixture into the pot through the pouring hole and start the paddle. The gelato mix will begin to harden over time and once the paddles stop turning, the mix is ready to transfer to a container and into the freezer. To get better consistency, I remove gelato from the freezer after 2 to 3 hours and mix it again with a fork and then return it back to the freezer and it will be ready for eating the next day. *(note: check the manual of the gelato machine for specific instructions. The more expensive machines will make the gelato ready to eat as it comes out of the machine.)*