

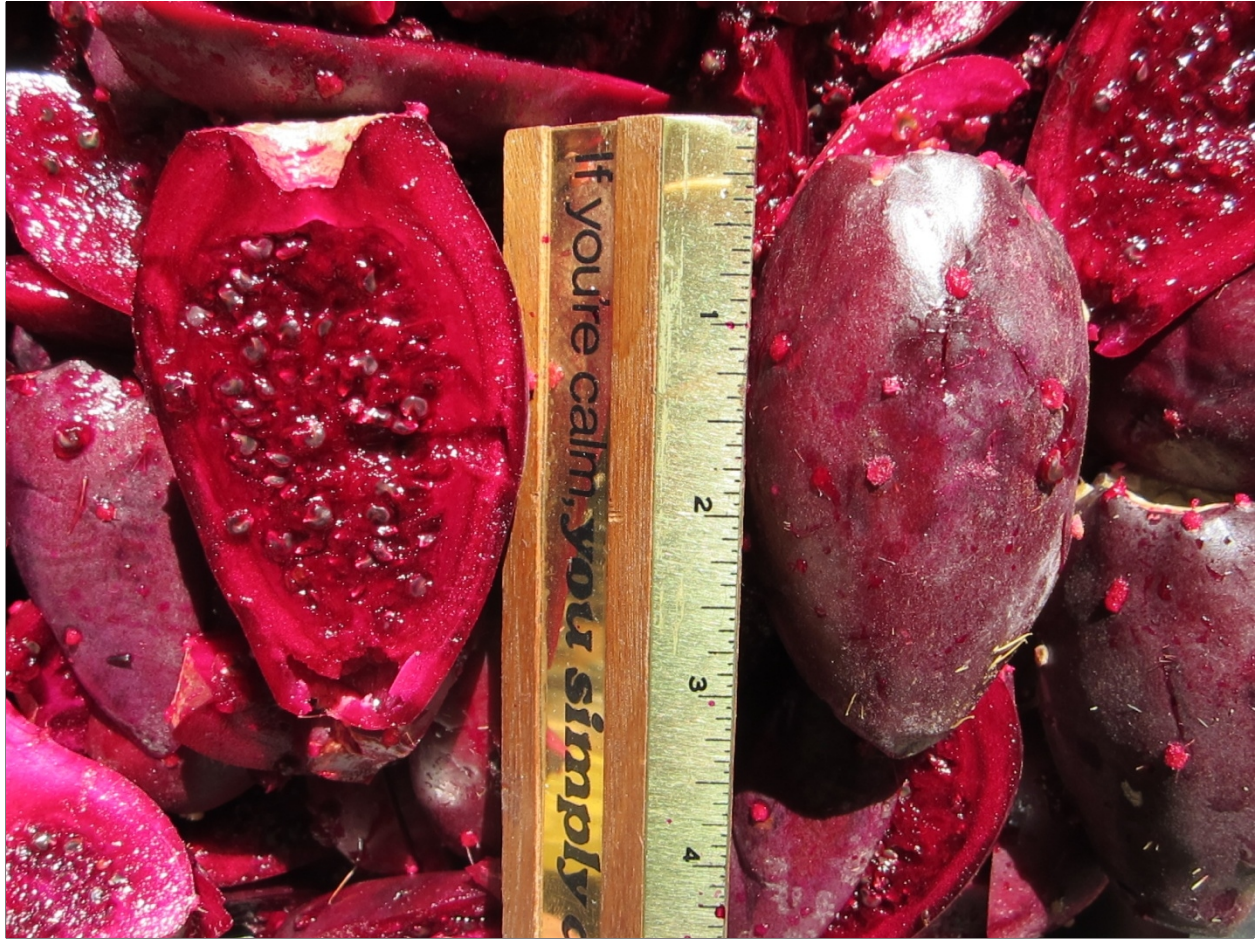
Engelmann Prickly Pear Jelly

This recipe was developed by Ty Harrison for a special variety of the Engelmann Prickly Pear which currently grows in Virgin Utah. It is reported only from Washington and San Juan Counties in Utah, but it is common in warmer climates in Arizona New Mexico and Texas. It has been propagated by local residents for many years and has been planted in various places around the town. Local information says that the original plant came from around the Virgin Post Office. The plant has large, deep purple and very juicy fruits with many per pad. Sometimes it is called "cactus apple" since it is popular with animals as well as humans. It has large pads and is quite upright with a woody base. Some plants may be back-cross hybrids between *Opuntia engelmannii* and *Opuntia phaeacantha*, but its genetics are not well understood. It, or its hybrids, is apparently common in the Virgin River Valley and into Zion Canyon.

Fruits were gathered in Virgin, Utah in late October of 2011 and were allowed to further ripen for a week or so. Extract the juice from the ripe fruits by cutting them in half using kitchen tongs and sharp knife. Barely covering the fruits with water and simmer for 30 minutes to an hour, macerating the fruits with a potato masher. The irritating tiny glochids on the fruits soften and disappear on cooking. Filter the juice through a jelly bag and store in refrigerator in large jars until ready to make the jelly. Or extracted juice can be processed in sealed jars until ready to make jelly.

Recipe: One package of commercial pectin is added to 7 cups of extracted cactus juice and when fully dissolved at a full rolling boil, 7 cups of sugar and ½ cup of lemon juice are added and brought to a full rolling boil for two minutes. Remove from heat, skim, and ladle into sterilized, sealable glass jars. Make approximately 11 eight ounce jars of jelly. The soft jelly is both sweet and sour with a very attractive dark, reddish-purple color.

The following image is of fruits collected in late October in Virgin, Utah. Fruits are often over three inches in length. Residents of Virgin who grow them say that supplemental irrigation provides an abundant crop each year.



Typical *Opuntia engelmannii* fruits