

Homemade Popsicles

Popsicles are a timeless tradition enjoyed by adults and kids alike. Being conscious of the ingredients and nutrition of our foods is an essential part of healthy eating. The easiest way to be sure you and your children are eating “real” foods is to make them from scratch. Popsicles are no exception. Anything that can be made as a liquid, such as a mixed juice or smoothie, can be frozen into popsicles.

Step 1: Make Your Popsicle Mix

To make homemade popsicles, the first step is to create the base or liquid mix. If your recipe requires sugar and water, it is helpful to dissolve the sugar into hot water first and then add the flavoring, such as blended fruit. Sugar is an important ingredient because it helps create a soft popsicle instead of a rock-hard ice cube. However, if you are trying to limit your sugar intake, a sugar-free sweetener can be substituted in the recipe without a drastic change in texture. The amount of blending you choose will also help create the level of texture in your popsicles. For smooth, seedless popsicles, blend well and then push the fruit pulp through a fine-mesh sieve. For a chunkier popsicle, blend less and do not push the fruit mix through a sieve. Either way is fine; make it the way you prefer.

If your popsicle recipe calls for a dairy base, the first steps will involve combining cream or milk with sugar, salt, and juice in a pan over medium-high heat. Yogurt or full-fat coconut milk from a can are also nice additions to a popsicle mix and create a creamier texture. Not all recipes will require heating, but many do. Be sure to read the recipe before beginning, so you know how much prep time the recipe requires before freezing. Some will require mixing all of the ingredients together in a bowl, while the ones that are heated may require up to 30 minutes of cooking before moving onto the next step of cooling the mixture before pouring it into the molds.

Step 2: Pour into molds

There are many shapes and sizes of molds available for use when making homemade popsicles. If you don't have popsicle molds, get creative! You can repurpose yogurt containers, muffin tins, and ice cube trays instead of using store-bought popsicle mold. No matter what type of mold you choose, the process will be the same. After the popsicle mix has been prepared, it is best to use a pitcher to pour the filling into the molds. You should leave about 1/4 of an inch of empty space at the top of the mold because the mix will expand as it freezes into popsicles. Clean extra residue from the top; otherwise, it can make removing the popsicles from the mold difficult.

Step 3: Add sticks

Popsicles without sticks are ice cubes! Be sure to add sticks into the molds before freezing your popsicles. The mold design should help the sticks to stand up straight, but if it doesn't, you can support the sticks by tightly wrapping the top of your mold with aluminum foil or strong plastic wrap and then poking the sticks through the wrap in the place you want them.

Step 4: Freezing

If you're using popsicle molds that allow for the stick to be placed in and held upright, cover the molds after filling and place in the freezer, allowing them to freeze completely, which should take between five to eight hours depending on the temperature of your freezer. If you are using molds that require a stick to be added later, allow them to freeze for about two hours and then add the sticks and return to the freezer for at least three hours or until completely frozen. It is best to remove the popsicles from the molds within a couple of days for the best texture and appearance.

Step 5: Unmolding

After your homemade popsicles are frozen solid, there are several different ways to unmold them. One way is to fill a container with warm water and briefly dip the mold into the water until the popsicles loosen from the mold and can be easily removed. The frozen popsicles can also be left sitting at room temperature for a while until they can be easily removed from the mold and still maintain their shape. After removing the popsicles from the molds, they can be individually wrapped and refrozen. The second freezing will help the popsicles keep their shape and not melt as quickly when they are being eaten. Be sure to eat your homemade popsicles within three to four weeks for the best texture and flavor.

In the heat of summer, there's nothing quite like a juicy, cool popsicle to help bring down your temperature and add a little fun to the day.