Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 30-40 minutes
Total time: 45-55 minutes
Yield: Approximately 3 cups (720 ml)

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Ingredients

- 2 lbs (about 900g) ripe but firm fresh apricots
- 1 ½ cups (300g) granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice (about 1 medium lemon)
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest (optional, for extra brightness)
- ¼ teaspoon salt (to enhance flavors)
- 1 vanilla bean (optional, but highly recommended) or 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Equipment

- A large, heavy-bottomed pot (Dutch oven or a wide saucepan works best)

- A wooden spoon or heat-proof spatula
- A potato masher
- 3-4 clean, sterilized 8-ounce (250ml) glass jars with lids
- A small plate placed in the freezer (for testing the jam’s set)

Instructions

Part 1: Preparation (Time: 15 minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Prepare the Apricots: Begin by washing and drying your apricots. Cut each apricot in half along the natural seam and remove the pit. There’s no need to peel them; the skins will break down during cooking and add a beautiful color and texture to the jam. Chop the apricot halves into roughly ½-inch pieces. If you prefer a smoother jam, you can chop them more finely.

2. Combine Ingredients: In your large, heavy-bottomed pot, combine the chopped apricots, granulated sugar, lemon juice, lemon zest (if using), and salt. If you are using a vanilla bean, split it lengthwise, scrape out the seeds, and add both the seeds and the pod to the pot. Stir everything together until the apricots are well-coated with the sugar.

3. Macerate: Let the mixture sit at room temperature for 15-20 minutes. This process, called maceration, allows the sugar to draw out the natural juices from the apricots, creating a syrup and preventing the jam from scorching on the bottom of the pot.

Part 2: Cooking the Jam (Time: 30-40 minutes | Intensity: Medium)

1. Bring to a Simmer: Place the pot over medium heat. Stir the mixture frequently with your wooden spoon to ensure the sugar dissolves completely without burning. Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer. You should see small bubbles forming around the edges.

2. Maintain a Gentle Boil: Once simmering, adjust the heat to maintain a steady, gentle boil. Continue to cook, stirring often to prevent sticking and scorching. The jam will begin to foam; you can skim off this foam with a spoon and discard it for a clearer final product.

3. Mash and Monitor: After about 10 minutes of simmering, use your potato masher to gently crush the apricot pieces. This will help release more pectin and create a thicker, more spreadable consistency. Continue to cook, stirring every few minutes. The jam will start to thicken and deepen in color.

4. Test for Doneness: The jam is ready when it has thickened and coats the back of your spoon. To be sure, perform the “cold plate test.” Remove the plate from the freezer and place a small dollop of jam on it. Return it to the freezer for 1-2 minutes. Push the edge of the jam with your finger. If it wrinkles and holds its shape, it’s ready. If it’s still runny, continue cooking for another 2-3 minutes and test again. The total cooking time can vary from 25 to 40 minutes depending on the water content of your apricots.

Part 3: Jarring and Cooling (Time: 10 minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Prepare Jars: While the jam is cooking, sterilize your jars and lids. You can do this by washing them in hot, soapy water and then submerging them in a pot of boiling water for 10 minutes. Carefully remove them with tongs and place them on a clean towel to air dry.

2. Fill the Jars: Once the jam has passed the wrinkle test, remove the pot from the heat. If you used a vanilla bean pod, remove and discard it now. Carefully ladle the hot jam into the sterilized jars, leaving about ½ inch (1 cm) of headspace at the top. This allows for expansion during freezing (if you choose to freeze it) and creates a better seal.

3. Seal and Cool: Wipe the rims of the jars with a clean, damp cloth to ensure a good seal. Screw on the lids tightly. Let the jars cool completely at room temperature on a wire rack. You should hear a “pop” sound as the lids seal, which indicates a vacuum has been formed. This can take several hours.

Part 4: Storage and Nutrition (Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Storage: Once cooled, store the sealed jars in the refrigerator. This refrigerator jam will last for up to 3-4 weeks in the fridge. Once opened, consume within 2 weeks for the best quality. For longer storage, you can freeze the jam for up to 6 months. Just be sure to use freezer-safe jars and leave adequate headspace.

2. Nutrition (per 1 tablespoon serving):

    - Calories: ~45
    - Total Fat: 0g
    - Sodium: 10mg
    - Total Carbohydrates: 11g
    - Sugars: 11g
    - Protein: 0g