



## Crab Apple Fruit Leather

This is a Dolgo Crab Apple tree. My old tree is three stories tall, and some have told me it's because back in the old days they did not use dwarfing rootstock. The younger trees I've seen are about 15 feet tall.

In September, the fruit ripens and begins to fall from the trees. The apples can still be used; just clean and sort thoroughly. Over the weeks, the fruit gets redder and sweeter and softer, but wait too long and the fruit starts to split, the critters bite into them, and they spoil even on the branches, and late in the season they fall with a mushy splat. So watch your tree and taste the apples, and get them in different stages to find out what they taste like.

They make beautiful jelly. But we are talking about fruit leather.

Remove stems and wash the apples very thoroughly if they were ground falls—I use three water changes, at least. Roughly toss them in the washes, as this will show up the “spoiled” ones, as the skin will break if there are bruises on the apples. I usually discard broken ones, spoiled ones, and ones that I can see a fruit fly has bored into.

A heavy-bottomed pot is best, stainless steel if possible, as the apples scorch easily in a thin-bottomed pot. Fill the pot quite full of apples and then add water to just about one-third the depth of the apples. Bring to a boil, stirring frequently as the apples begin to break. Cook, stirring frequently, until you can easily mash an apple against the side of the pot.

Put the apples through a food mill.

I use a Foley food mill



or a Victorio strainer which really removes from the cooked apple mixture.



every possible bit of “sauce”

Sweeten the applesauce to taste.



This is a Teflex sheet for the Excalibur model. No oil needed on the sheet as the leather will easily peel off.



The American Harvest dehydrator has round plastic trays. I oil them very lightly, using a paper towel to absorb the excess; I have not been able to get the fruit leather off them otherwise! Just a very thin coating of oil and you will be able to peel the leather off when it is done.



The applesauce will “pour” when it is hot. If the sauce is cold, it will thicken, and you may need to spread it. Make the layer about 1/4 inch thick. Dry at 135 degrees F. for 8–12 hours. Peel off the leather. I roll the sheet up into “logs.”

Sometimes I cut it into strips.

For storage, I use resealable plastic bags, sometimes keeping them in the frig, sometimes not. It keeps a long time.

