



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Cherry Jello Salad

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Tips and Time Savers

- Add a few stemmed maraschino cherries and some mint or basil to the cherry salad just before serving as a garnish. It's pretty and gives your guests a hint as to what's inside the delicious dish.
- Toasting the pecans only takes about five minutes and it makes them taste more buttery and extra crunchy. Heat them in a 375-degree F oven, watching carefully so they don't burn.
- Make sure that you whisk the Jello powder into the boiling water until it dissolves completely. Otherwise, it might taste grainy.
- Use full-fat cream cheese and sour cream. Low-fat dairy will be too watery.
- This dish is best served chilled, and slices will be easier to cut if the cherry salad is cold.
- Soften cream cheese quickly by placing the unopened, foil-wrapped block in a bowl of warm water. Flip it every few minutes, and the cream cheese will be soft in about 10 minutes!

Storage

Cherry salad is one of those easy recipes you'll want to keep eating—bowl after bowl. However, extras are easy to store if you have 'em.

Cover the casserole dish with plastic wrap or put leftover cherry salad into an airtight container. Refrigerate and enjoy within four days.

Since the topping is made from a combination of sour cream and cream cheese, I don't recommend freezing it. The creamy mixture tends to separate during thawing, tasting grainy and watery.

Variations

- Switch up the fruit: Swap the cherry pie filling for strawberry, raspberry, or even blueberry for a patriotic summer version that looks like it should be carried into the picnic on a velvet pillow.
- Give it a citrus twist: Add 1 tablespoon of fresh orange zest to the cream cheese mixture for a bright, almost creamsicle moment that absolutely slaps with cherry.
- Go full retro with a pretzel crust: If you're craving the sweet-salty drama of Strawberry Pretzel Salad, press a quick pretzel crust into the bottom of the dish and pour the cherry Jello layer over it. Let it chill, add topping, and watch people gasp like you've reinvented potluck society.
- Spike it... gently: Add 1–2 tablespoons of amaretto or cherry liqueur to the cream cheese mixture. For adults only, obviously — we're not starting a family rebellion at the Christmas table.

FAQs

Is cherry salad a side dish or dessert?

That's the best part—it can be both! Some families love it as a not-too-sweet dessert. However, cherry salad is also a popular Southern side dish, served right along with your main meal, like cinnamon apples and sweet potatoes with marshmallows.

Can I make the cherry salad in advance?

Yep. Keep in mind that the cherry Jello mixture has to set in the refrigerator for about four hours. Then, you'll add the topping. You can do this a day in advance if you need to.

How do I make individual portions of cherry salad?

You can make individual cherry salads in disposable plastic cups—look for treat cups or dessert cups for a prettier presentation. Let the Jello set in the cups, not a casserole dish.

What can I substitute for cherry Jello mix?

You could try another flavor of Jello, like strawberry, raspberry, or even cranberry. Don't leave out the Jello, though, or the cherry/pineapple mixture will be runny.

Why did my topping turn grainy?

Cold cream cheese is the culprit. Make sure it's softened properly and whisk it until smooth before adding the sour cream. Treat her gently and she behaves.

Nice to Have

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Show off the layers by making this jello salad in a clear, pyrex baking dish. These come with their own lids! [See them here.](#)