

SUBSTITUTES & OTHER TRANSFORMATIONS

AGAR AGAR (or simply agar) is a setting agent made from dried seaweed and can withstand simmering and even boiling, unlike gelatine whose setting properties are diminished with too much heat. It sets fairly quickly at room temperature. Two tablespoons agar flakes are equivalent to 2 teaspoons powdered agar, which are equivalent to 2 teaspoons powdered gelatine.

➔ To make a soft jelly [jello, US] from agar agar flakes:

- Pour 3 cups liquid [700ml] into a saucepan.
This can be a mixture of juices and/or diluted squash or cordial, and can include wine (mulled wine and cranberry juice are nice), or a shot of liqueur, if you like.
- Sprinkle over it 2 slightly-rounded Tbsp. agar agar flakes.
Let stand about 10–15 minutes.
- Place the pan over medium heat and bring to a gentle simmer.
Let simmer about 10 minutes, until all the flakes have dissolved.
- Strain the mixture, then pour into ramekins or small dishes.
This soft jelly will, in time, 'weep' its liquid; it also collapses easily when you spoon into it, so individual dishes are better suited than a large bowl.

➔ Directions for a very firm jelly that won't weep: use 3 slightly rounded Tbsp. agar flakes in the recipe above but, be warned, it'll be so firm you could just about sculpt it.

➔ To set 1 British pint [$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups]: use 2 Tbsp. agar flakes or 2 tsp. powdered agar for a fairly firm jelly.