

CANNING 101

Putting up your harvest for the season

Step 6: Remove sterilized lid from the simmering water and place on top of the clean jar rim, gently aligning it properly.

Step 7: Take an unbent and undamaged band, and gently screw it onto the jar with the tips of your fingers, just until you just feel resistance. This is called “fingertip tight”, and allows for the trapped air bubbles to escape during processing.

Step 8: Place filled jar carefully back into the water bath with your jar lifter. You might have to remove some of the water out of the canner with a heat resistant measuring cup as you go along, as the water will be displaced by the freshly filled jars. *Be sure to maintain at least 1” of water over the top of your jars when processing.*

Step 9: Place the lid on the canner, and bring to 212°F, or the boiling point. Once you reach this temperature, you can start timing according to the recipe; generally this takes 10-15 minutes for most pickles, jams, and jellies.

Step 10: Carefully remove jars from the water bath, and place on a towel lined counter, letting them remain undisturbed for 12-24 hours.

Step 11: Check your seals by touching the tops of the lids (if they are concave and don’t bounce back, they are good). You should also check the seals by unscrewing the ring, and lifting the jar by the lid with your fingertips. If the seal is good, it will hold.

Step 12: Re-process any jars that haven’t sealed with new clean lids, or place in the refrigerator and consume within a week. Store the jars in a cool, dark place for up to a year after canning.



Canning as a food preservation method is great practice at self-reliance and an excellent way to put up your excess bounty for later enjoyment. Here we will go over the necessary equipment required for canning your fresh food into creations that will brighten the cold, dark months. We will also go over a non-comprehensive (very basic) step-by-step process of water bath canning, just so you have an idea of what you’ll be getting into.

There are two types of canning methods that we will briefly cover, each with a specific purpose:

Water bath canning is the most commonly used method of canning, and is perfect for those just starting to learn about food preservation. With this method you can do **high acid** foods which include jams, jellies, pickles, sauces, and salsa. To kill the bacteria that can cause the food to spoil, water bath canning is done at the boiling point of water, or 212° F. *Always be sure to process your food at the proper length of time according to the recipe.*

The second method is **pressure canning** which is a bit different from water bath canning. To kill the bacteria that can cause botulism, you must utilize the high pressure from the steam in the pressure canner to bring the temperature up to 240° F. Foods commonly processed by the pressure canner method are **low acid** foods such as vegetables, meats, and stews. *Always be sure to follow the exact instructions when using a pressure canner.*

GETTING STARTED: SUPPLIES

If you have a well-stocked kitchen, you may already have some of the basic supplies that you’ll need to get started. Being prepared and having all your ingredients and supplies cleaned and set up in advance can eliminate stress in the middle of the process.

Water Bath Canning:

1. You'll need a good sized *stockpot with a lid* for processing. Typically, a 21.5 quart is the most common size for canning. Enameled stockpots are a relatively inexpensive option, however you can use any stockpot in your home for making small batches, as long as you have 1-2" of water covering the tops of your canning jars during processing.

2. If **pressure canning**, the *All American Pressure Canner* is a somewhat costly investment, but is a well recommended, high quality, reliable pressure canner that requires no gaskets, but rather a metal on metal seal. The dial gauge must be tested once a year for accuracy. In order to kill the bacteria that can emit toxins in your food, ensure that you are maintaining the proper temperature while using the dial gauge in tandem with the pressure regulator weight when processing.

Please note: Pressure canning is not recommended for a glass stovetop, as you run the risk of the weight damaging or cracking the surface

3. You'll need clean, undamaged *canning jars with new lids* (Ball and Kerr brands are readily available at most retailers), and undamaged metal *canning rings*. Jars range in size from 4oz - 1/2 gallon, depending on what you'll need for your recipe or preference. If you're looking for a reusable canning lid rather than throwing them away each time, there is a brand called *Tattler* that has reusable BPA-free plastic lids with reusable gaskets.

4. A *canning rack* is necessary to keep the jars from touching the bottom of the pot, and to help keep them all in place.

5. A *lid and jar lifter* are an absolute must. The lid lifter is magnetic, so you can easily pick up your lids one by one to place on your hot filled jars. The jar lifter allows for a steady transport, to keep your jars as level as possible, and to keep your hand away from the hot water.

6. A canning *funnel* and canning *ladle* are incredibly useful. You can choose either inexpensive plastic, or durable stainless steel.

7. A thin *plastic or silicone spatula/scrapper* is a great tool for removing air bubbles in your jars before processing. Excess air can cause many problems, one of which is seal failure.

8. You'll need a good *canning thermometer* that fits in your pot to make sure that you are getting up to the correct temperature for sanitizing your jars, as well as a reliable *timer*.

9. There are many excellent cookbooks available with unique newer recipes, or variations on the classics: *The Canning Kitchen: 101 Simple Small Batch Recipes*, and *Put em' Up!* are great cookbooks to get some preserving inspiration. *The Ball Book* is also a fantastic comprehensive tool, complete with easy to read instructions on the whole canning process, with traditional and updated recipes.

10. **TIME!** Small batch canning can be done in an evening after work, but sometimes having a day or weekend set aside is very helpful, as preparing food, setting up equipment, processing/cooling time, and cleanup can eat up a good chunk of the day. It is nice to feel relaxed and not rushed while preserving.



****If you require assistance with any canning questions, reach out to your local Extension Service if available- a valuable resource.****

TIP: Label your work appropriately. This can be done with decorative labels that are either store bought or homemade. It can also be a simple sharpie on the lid, noting the date and what's inside. A canning journal is very useful in keeping track of successes and failures, or knowing if you made too much or too little for the year. It's also great for your own personal recipe adjustments to suite your tastes.

PUTTING IT UP!

Water Bath Canning Step by Step Guideline:

- Step 1:** Set up and clean work area and supplies.
Step 2: Begin jar sterilization. Simmer jars and lids separately for a minimum of 10 minutes at 180°F. Make sure the lid bands are washed, dried, and set aside.
Step 3: Having selected your recipe in advance, prepare your food according to the instructions.
Step 4: Removing one jar at a time, pack the jars with the prepared foods as quickly and safely as you can, leaving the proper amount of headspace according to your recipe (this is usually 1/4"-1/2").
Step 5: Wipe the rim of the jar using a clean, damp paper towel, removing any food residue or particles that may have spilled on the rim.