

10 Tips for Canning Foods at Home Safely

Canning foods at home can be a fun way to preserve an abundant harvest from your garden. However if done incorrectly home-canned foods can cause serious, even fatal, foodborne illness. Make sure the foods you preserve at home are safe for you and your family by following these recommendations:

1. **Start with a clean preparation area and the freshest foods possible.** Check jars for nicks and cracks. Make sure your equipment is clean and in good working order.

2. **Always use a pressure canner when canning low-acid foods.** This includes most vegetables (except many tomato products), seafood, poultry, and meat.

3. **If using a pressure canner with a dial gauge, have it tested each year.** In fact, have your pressure canner checked to make sure that gaskets (if present) are in good shape and that vents, safety valves and edges of the lid are clean.

4. **Always use tested recipes that have up-to-date, researched processing (canning) times.** Sources of tested recipes include the National Center for Home Food Preservation and companies that produce home canning supplies. Recipes from cookbooks, the personal internet sites or older Extension publications should not be used.

5. **Do not alter ingredients in tested recipes.** Changing the ingredients in a tested recipe can make that recipe unsafe for home food preservation.

6. **When filling jars, always use the correct headspace.** Headspace is the space in the jar that is between the lid and the top of the food or liquid. Having too little or too much headspace can affect how the lid seals and the quality of the final product.

7. **After jars have been processed (canned), check the lids within 12 to 24 hours to make sure they are sealed.** Food from jars that did not seal should be frozen or refrigerated and eaten in a couple of days. You may also reprocess (re-can) it within 24 hours.



8. Label lids with the name of the food, date the food was canned, and batch number (if you canned more than once that day). That way, if you see signs of spoilage, you can identify the batch number and pay special attention to those jars.

9. Store canned foods in a dark, cool, and dry, place. If the food is stored in a humid place, the moisture can cause the lids to rust, leading to spoilage. Periodically check the jars for signs of spoilage.

10. For best quality, use home-canned foods within one year.

For additional information:

So Easy to Preserve (University of Georgia Cooperative Extension)

<http://www.uga.edu/setp/>

National Center for Home Food Preservation <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/>