

Preparedness Hints

Canning Process Adjustments at High Altitudes



Using the process time for canning food at sea level may result in spoilage if you live at altitudes of 1,000 feet or more. Water boils at lower temperatures as altitude increases. Lower boiling temperatures are less effective for killing bacteria. Increasing the process time or canner pressure compensates for lower boiling temperatures.

Therefore, when following canning directions in this series, select the proper processing time or canner pressure for the altitude where you live. If you do not know the altitude, contact your local county Extension agent. An alternative source of information would be the local district conservationist with the Soil Conservation Service.

Equipment and Methods Not Recommended

Open-kettle canning and the processing of freshly filled jars in conventional ovens, microwave ovens, and dishwashers are not recommended, because these practices do not prevent all risks of spoilage. Steam canners are not recommended because processing times for use with current models have not been adequately researched.

Because steam canners do not heat foods in the same manner as boiling-water canners, their use with boiling-water process times may result in spoilage. It is not recommended that pressure processes in excess of 15 PSI be applied when using new pressure canning equipment. So-called canning powders are useless as preservatives and do not replace the need for proper heat processing. Jars with wire bails and glass caps make attractive antiques or storage containers for dry food ingredients but are not recommended for use in canning. One-piece zinc porcelain-lined caps are also no longer recommended. Both glass and zinc caps use flat rubber rings for sealing jars, but too often fail to seal properly.

Ensuring High Quality Canned Foods

Begin with good-quality fresh foods suitable for canning. Quality varies among varieties of fruits and vegetables. Many County Extension offices can recommend varieties best suited for canning. Examine food carefully for freshness and wholesomeness. Discard diseased and moldy food. Trim small diseased lesions or spots from food.

Can fruits and vegetables picked from your garden or purchased from nearby producers when the products are at their peak of quality—within 6 to 12 hours after harvest for most vegetables. For best quality, apricots, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums should be ripened 1 or more days between harvest and canning. If you must delay the canning of other fresh produce, keep it in a shady, cool place. Fresh home-slaughtered red meats and poultry should be chilled and canned without delay. Do not can meat from sickly or diseased animals. Ice fish and seafoods after harvest, eviscerate immediately. You must can them within 2 days.

Maintaining Color and Flavor in Canned Food

To maintain good natural color and flavor in stored canned food you must: remove oxygen from food tissues and jars; quickly destroy the food enzymes; obtain high jar vacuums and airtight jar seals.

Follow these guidelines to ensure that your canned foods retain optimum colors and flavors during processing and storage: use only high quality foods which are at the proper maturity and are free of diseases and bruises.

Personal and Family Preparedness

Vision: Each family uses principles of provident living in their daily lives.

Mission: "Increase awareness and practice of home production and storage."