

QUICK GUIDE TO SAFE CANNING

Canning is fairly simple. You fill a clean jar with prepared food, apply the flat lid and the threaded ring to the jar and submerge the filled jar in boiling water for a prescribed amount of time (times vary widely, depending on what you're canning). This is a method of food preservation, known as hot water bath canning.

When you remove the hot jar from the hot water, the heat begins to escape, taking with it any air left in the jar. The escaping oxygen pulls the lid down, creating an airtight seal. A food-safe sealing compound embedded into the lid aids in the maintenance of the seal. High-acid food preserved in this manner will keep for at least a year.

Tools & Equipment for Canning

- Tongs / Canning Jar lifter
- Wide-mouth funnel
- Measuring cups
- Mason Jar lifter (Cheap tool that can prevent you from burning yourself)
- Vessels: A large, wide, non-reactive pot like an enameled Dutch oven is a good vessel for cooking preserves. A deep stockpot makes an excellent canning pot. Just pop a round rack or kitchen rag into the bottom of the pot so that the water can circulate fully around the jars.

Here's how you do the Canning.

1. Find a recipe from a reliable source like trusted cookbooks or with tested recipes like the sweet n spicy beets and bread n butter pickles. Always work with the freshest produce you can find.
2. Remove lids and rings from jars. Place the number of jars you'll need on top of the rack in your stock pot. Fill pot (and jars) with water to cover, place a lid on the pot and bring it to a boil. Put your lids in a small saucepan and bring them to the barest simmer on the back of the stove.
3. While the canning pot comes to a boil, prepare your product. When your recipe is complete, remove the jars from the canning pot (pouring the water back into the pot as you remove the jars) and lay them out on a clean towel on your counter.
4. Carefully fill your jars with your product. Depending on the recipe, you'll need to leave between 1/4 and 1/2 an inch of space between the surface of the product and the top of the jar. Use a canning funnel to make filling easy and clean. Use a wooden skewer to release any air bubbles inside the jar

5. Wipe the rims of the jar with a clean, damp paper towel or the edge of a kitchen towel. Apply lids and screw the bands on the jars to hold the lids down during processing.
6. Carefully lower the filled jars into the canning pot. You may need to remove some water as you put the jars in the pot. Use a canning jar lifter for the safest and easiest method.
7. Once the pot has returned to a boil, start your timer. The length of the processing time will vary from recipe to recipe. When your timer goes off, remove the jars from the water bath promptly. Place them back on the towel-lined countertop and let them cool on a wire rack.
8. The jar lids should begin to ping soon after they've been removed from the pot. The pinging is the sound of the seals being formed and the center of the lids will become concave as the vacuum seal takes hold.
9. After the jars have cooled to room temperature, remove the bands and check the seals. You do this by grasping the jar by the edge of the lid and gently lifting it an inch or two off the countertop. The lid should hold.
10. Once you've determined that your seals are good, remove the rings and wash the jars well to remove any sticky residue. Store your jars in a cool, dark place for up to a year. Jars that don't seal can be refrigerated and used first.

Common Canning Issues

1. Causes of Jars not Sealing

There may have been a bit of product on the rim of the jar, making it hard for the lid to get a good hold.

The sealing compound on the lid wasn't fully softened before you applied it.

Was your product piping hot when it went into the jars? If not, there may not have been enough heat in the jar to create the necessary vacuum effect.

2. Losing product during the Sealing process

This happens sometimes when a hot jar experiences rapid temperature change. The quick cooling can sometimes force product out of the jar. It's not something to worry about unless it interferes with the seal. Just wash your jars well and store as usual.

To prevent it in the future, take care to remove all trapped air bubbles inside the jar before canning. You can also let jars sit in the canner for a few minutes, off the heat and with the lid removed, so that the temperature change isn't as drastic.

See our recipes for Canning beets and pickles.