

Safe Canning Guidelines

A procedural guide for safe home canning and preserving methods. It addresses best practices to avoid contamination and spoilage of canned foods.

Step 1: **Preparation**

Gather all necessary equipment for canning, such as jars, lids, bands, a canner, and canning utensils. Ensure everything is clean and in good condition.

Step 2: **Sanitization**

Sanitize jars and lids by boiling them for at least 10 minutes to kill any bacteria, yeasts, and molds that could cause spoilage.

Step 3: **Food Handling**

Handle and prepare the food to be canned with clean hands and utensils. Make sure to wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly and to trim any spoiled parts.

Step 4: **Filling Jars**

Fill the jars with the prepared food, leaving the appropriate headspace as specified by the recipe. Remove any air bubbles by running a non-metallic utensil around the inside of the jar.

Step 5: **Sealing**

Wipe the rims of the jars to remove any food particles, center the sanitized lids on the jars, and apply the bands until they are fingertip tight.

Step 6: **Processing**

Process the jars using the recommended canning method—water bath or pressure canning—making sure to follow precise times and pressures for the type of food being canned.

Step 7: **Cooling**

Once processing time is complete, turn off the heat and let jars cool in the canner for 5 minutes. Then, carefully remove the jars and let them cool on a towel for 12-24 hours without touching or bumping them.

Step 8: **Testing Seals**

Check the seals by pressing down on the center of the lid; it should not flex up and down. If the lid does not seal properly, refrigerate the jar and use the contents within a few days.

Step 9: **Storage**

Label and date the jars before storing them in a cool, dark place. Avoid extreme temperatures and light, which can cause deterioration of the canned food.

General Notes

Acid Levels

Ensure foods that are being canned—especially low-acid foods—are processed according to tested recipes that include proper acidification when needed, such as by adding lemon juice or vinegar.

Altitude Adjustments

Adjust processing time or pressure for your altitude. Higher altitudes require changes to processing to ensure the safety of the canned food.

Use Current Guidelines

Always use up-to-date canning guidelines from a reliable source, such as the National Center for Home Food Preservation, to ensure that canning practices are safe and current.