

# safety guidelines for pressure cooker canning

WITH ELIZABETH POETT

## BASIC MATERIALS:

- 1 pressure canner and rack
- 1 canning pot and rack
- 1 wooden skewer
- 1 jar lifter aka canning tongs
- 1 canning funnel
- 1 ladle
- 1 canning jars with bands and new lids
- 1 lid wand
- 1 timer

**NOTE:** *There are both electric and stove top pressure canners. The electric canners are more common, but either is fine to use for this—just follow the manufacturer's instructions specific to your own canner. The recipes will have specific PSI and processing times that should be followed.*

## CLEAN AND HEAT JARS

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1. Fill a canning pot about halfway with water and place the rack inside. Wash canning jars with bands (which are used to hold the lids in place) and new lids in hot, soapy water and rinse them well. Once your jars are clean and dry, fill them with water and submerge them into the canning pot, making sure they are fully covered by 1-2 inches of water. Place the pot on your heat source. Bring the water to a boil, then turn off the heat. Leave your jars in hot water until you are ready to fill, but not so long that they cool completely. Add lids and bands to the water to warm them up, which will help with the sealing process.

**TIP:** *A canning pot is a special type of pot that can withstand hot temperatures and has a place for a rack inside to hold your jars.*

## PREPARE CANNER

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2. Fill the bottom of the pressure canner with 2-3 inches of warm water and place a rack inside.

## FILL JARS

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3. Ladle your product into a jar, leaving the amount of headspace specific to the recipe you are following. This is important because overfilling jars can lead to improper sealing and allow bacteria to get in. Refer to your recipe or <https://nchfp.uga.edu/> for more information.

**TIP:** *Hot ingredients should never be poured into a room temperature jar, as abrupt temperature changes may cause your jars to break.*

## SEAL JARS

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4. Wipe the jar rim with a clean, wet cloth to ensure that nothing will interfere with the seal of the jar. Insert a wooden skewer into the jar and move it through the contents to send any air bubbles in the product to the surface. Place a clean, hot lid on the jar, making sure that the sealing compound on the bottom side of the lid is centered on the jar rim. Screw the band over the lid and tighten it until you are met with resistance. Do not overtighten the band.

## SEAL CANNER

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5. Lift jars one by one onto the rack inside the pressure canner. In sealing the pressure canner, it is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions specific to your equipment and specific to the altitude at which you are cooking. This information can be found in the instruction manual that came with the canner. It's crucial to follow this step to ensure the canner correctly seals the jars and prevents harmful bacteria from getting inside. Once the pressure canner is sealed, the process will differ based on whether your pressure canner is electric or manual. For a manual pressure cooker, turn the heat source on high until you observe steam coming out consistently

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from the vent pipe for ten minutes. Then add the pressure regulator weight for cooking at the PSI or pressure that corresponds to your recipe. Wait for the pressure regulator weight to begin to jiggle. **Always take a moment to pay attention to the processing time and weight setting specific to the recipe you are following. If you are unsure, check <https://nchfp.uga.edu/> to confirm that you are using the correct time and weight settings to ensure that no bacteria gets into the can.** Start a timer for the number of minutes in your recipe. Adjust the temperature until the weight only jumps between 1 and 4 times per minute. The differences between a dial gauge pressure canner and a weighted gage pressure canner is that with a dial gauge pressure canner, the pounds of pressure can be adjusted 1 number at a time to the specific altitude (you can adjust to 11 pounds of pressure if you are at 1001-2000 feet, 12 pounds of pressure if you are between 2001-4000 feet). The only options on a weighted gauge are 5, 10, and 15 pounds of pressure, so if you are up above 1000 feet, you set the gauge for 15 psi. You'll know which kind you have based on the instruction manual, as well as the parts that came with it. If at any moment during the processing time the pressure goes below the recommended amount, bring the canner back to pressure and begin the timing of the process over using the total original process time. This is important for the safety of the food.

## TURN OFF CANNER AND REMOVE JARS

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6. At the end of the required number of minutes, turn off the heat and allow the canner to cool slowly. When the pressure dial gauge drops to zero, remove the pressure regulator weight with a hot mitt. Wait 2 more minutes before removing the cover of the pressure cooker. Tilt the lid away from yourself to avoid hot steam. Carefully use the jar lifter to move the jars to a cooling rack or cloth on a flat surface.

## LET SIT FOR 24 HOURS

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7. Let the jars sit for 24 hours before checking the lids to make sure they are sealed and moving them to storage. You may hear the pop of sealing jars right away, or much later. You'll know the lids are sealed because of the popping noise they make and the indented lid of the can. If the lid of the can is not visibly indented, immediately put your product into the fridge and consume within one week, as it did not properly seal and will not have a shelf life. The cans that were properly sealed will have a shelf life of 6 months to 1 year.

## FINISH

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8. Use a permanent pen to write the date on the jar's lid. Sealed jars don't need the bands, so you can remove them to reuse. Then, if you like, decorate your jar with a label, cloth, or paper cover. Canned sauces or preserves make for a great gift!

*Safety notes continued on next page*

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## DISCLAIMER: SAFETY NOTES

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*Properly handled sterilized equipment will keep canned foods in good condition for 1 year. Making sure hands, equipment, and surfaces in your canning area are clean is the first step in canning.*

**TIPS:** *Jars should be made from glass and free of any chips or cracks. Preserving or canning jars are topped with glass, plastic, or metal lids that have a rubber-like seal. Two-piece metal lids are most common.*

**TO PREPARE JARS BEFORE FILLING:** *Wash jars with hot, soapy water, rinse them well, and arrange them open-side up, without touching, on a tray. To sterilize jars, boil them in a large saucepan, covered with water, for 10 minutes. Jars have to be sterilized only if the food to be preserved will be processed for less than 10 minutes in a boiling-water bath or pressure canner. To sterilize jars, boil them in a large saucepan, covered with water, for 10 minutes. Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and preparing lids and bands. Use tongs or jar lifters to remove hot, sterilized jars from the boiling water. Be sure the tongs are sterilized too: Dip the tong ends in boiling water for a few minutes before using them. All items used in the process of making jams, jellies, preserves, and pickles must be clean, including any towels and especially your hands. After the jars are prepared, you can preserve the food. It is important to follow any canning and processing instructions included in the recipe and refer to USDA guidelines about the sterilization of canned products. Find information on canning at the National Center for Home Food Preservation website: <http://nchfp.uga.edu>*