

safety guidelines for water bath canning

WITH ELIZABETH POETT

BASIC MATERIALS:

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

CLEAN AND HEAT JARS

1. Fill a canning pot about halfway with water and place the rack inside. Place the pot on your stovetop (or heat source) and set the burners to high heat. 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. Cleanliness is one of the most important parts of canning, so make sure they are as clean as possible. Jars with hard water buildup can be cleaned with vinegar before and after processing, or you can add a little bit of vinegar to the water bath to help with hard water. Place lids and bands aside to dry.

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.

FILL AND BOIL JARS

2. When lifting the lid of the canning pot, open it away from yourself to avoid getting burned by steam. 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. 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.

FILL JARS WITH PRODUCT

3. When filling your jars it is important to do so on a clean cloth or wooden surface, rather than a cold metal or stone surface, to prevent your hot jars from breaking. Use the jar lifter to pull the first jar out of the water bath, handling it carefully. Pour out the water, insert the canning funnel into the mouth of the jar, and ladle your product into the jar until there is just 1/4-inch of headspace.

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

SEAL AND REINSERT JARS

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

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REMOVE JARS FROM WATER

5. Once the processing time is over, turn off the heat. Carefully use the jar lifter to move the jars to a cooling rack or cloth on a flat surface. Leave a little bit of space between the jars and allow them to sit for 24 hours.

CHECK JARS AFTER 24 HOURS

6. Let the jars sit for 24 hours without moving or touching them to ensure they have sealed. You may hear the pop of sealing jars right away, or it may be much later. Once the full 24 hours have gone by, check the lids to make sure they are properly sealed before labeling them and moving them to storage. If the jar successfully sealed, the lid will be smooth. If it did not, the lid will have a little mound in the center. If it is not sealed, put the jar in the fridge and consume the product within a week. If it did seal, it will have a shelf life of 6 months to 1 year. Refer to <https://nchfp.uga.edu/> if you are unsure of your product's shelf life.

FINISH

7. 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

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>*