So You Want to Preserve
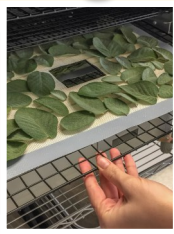
Canning Basics

When starting the canning process, there are supplies you will need such as jars, rings, and lids. These are necessary to ensure products are canned safely.

Let's Start with Jars:

Not all jars are suitable for canning. Jars used for canning are designed to withstand repeated high temperatures that occur during canning.

Commercial mayonnaise and other glass jars may not seal and can break during the canning process.

With the exception of jelly jars, the word "Mason" may be engraved on the jar. Jars are available in regular (2.75 inches) or wide mouth (3.38 inches).

Jars with porcelain lined zinc lids and jars with wire bails and glass caps can be found in antique and thrift stores. These jars are no longer recommended for home canning.

Jars (left to right) quart jar, pint jar, jelly jar and quarter pint jar. The quart jar is a wide mouth jar, the rest are regular mouth.

Two Piece Lids:

Most canning jars are sealed with a two piece, self sealing lid.

Lids

A flat, metal disc with a sealing compound around the outer edge. Lids last for about one year. After that time, they may not seal. Lids are not reusable. After one use, toss. Read the directions for preparing the lids, most lids only require washing before use.

Rings - Metal Screw Bands

The ring can be reused. If it becomes rusty or has a dent, toss.

Additional Helpful Equipment:

Funnel
Aids in packing jars.

More information at: https://go.unl.edu/foodpreservation

Jar Lifter
Makes moving hot jars in and out of a canner easier.

Bubble Freer and Headspace Measurer
Aids in removing bubbles and is used to measure the headspace.

Other Helpful Items

- *Hot Pads*
- *Knives and Cutting Board*
- *Timer*
- *Clean Cloth - general clean up & wiping jar rims*
- *Ladle*
- *Cooling Rack or Towel - for cooling jars*

Types of Canners

Boiling Water Canners

Used for high acid foods like fruits, tomatoes, jams & jellies, pickles and fermented foods.

Boiling water canners are made of aluminum, stainless steel, or porcelain covered steel. They have removable perforated racks and fitted lids. The canner must be deep enough so that at least 1 to 2 inches of briskly boiling water will be over the tops of the jars during processing.

Canners and Stoves

Porcelain covered steel canners with ridged bottoms are best used on gas stoves.

Flat-bottomed canners can be used on all stoves. On an electric stove, the canner bottom should not be more than 4 inches wider than the burner. Always center the canner on the burner.

Before canning on a smooth top range, check the range manufacturer for advice on suitability for canning and recommended maximum canner size for specific burners.

Steam Canners

Used for high acid foods like fruits, tomatoes, jams & jellies, pickles, and fermented foods.

Recently, the University of Wisconsin tested atmospheric steam canners for home canning of acid foods.

The only 2 types of steam canners tested were, a **Back to Basics**® canner and a **Victorio**® model**,** other canners have not been tested and are not recommended at this time.

Photo: Colorado State University Extension, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health via Flickr

Atmospheric steam canners surround the jars with steam instead of water. Steam canners can only be used with high acid foods. Processing time is limited to 45 minutes or less because of the amount of water in the base.

Reliable Resources:

National Home Food Preservation
https://nchfp.uga.edu

Nebraska Extension
www.food.unl.edu

Pressure Canners

Used for LOW-acid foods like meats, vegetables, and many combination foods.

Pressure canners for home use can be thicker walled kettles with clamp-on lids or lightweight, thin walled kettles with turn-on lids and a gasket.

All pressure canners have
- a dial or weighted gauge
- a way to let steam out (may be a counterweight or petcock)
- and a safety vent (often called a safety fuse)
- All canners should come with a jar rack.

Pressure Canner Gauges

Many Nebraska county extension offices have a dial gauge tester. Contact your local office to find an office to test your dial gauge.

https://go.unl.edu/foodpreservation

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