

The Best Little Organic Farm



Canning Guide for Beginners

This guide is intended for beginning canners using a water-bath method of canning. Suggested foods to can are tomatoes, apples, and any jams or jellies. These foods are relatively inexpensive and an affordable investment.

_____ 1. Find a great canning cookbook. Consider basic canning techniques and simple recipes. Like any good cookbook, it should resonate with you.

_____ 2. Decide what to can and how you will preserve it. For example, if you are canning apples will they be sliced, made into applesauce, apple butter, or used for pie filling? So many delicious choices!

_____ 3. The way you intend to preserve your food will determine what kind of jars you will buy. Select wide-mouth jars. Buying by the case is usually cheaper per jar. Check garage sales and second-hand stores for great deals. Make sure you use the “finger test” and run your finger lightly along the rim of each jar to make sure you are not buying a jar with chipped glass. New jars will come with bands and lids. Lids and bands can be purchased separately for second-hand jars.

- Jams, jellies, and preserves should go into eight to twelve-ounce jars
- Sauces such as tomato, canned tomatoes, or applesauce, should go into pint size jars. This size is also good for any small fruit like apricots or grapes. Some stores may also sell jars with a 2 ½ cup fill. These jars are processed for the same amount of time as quart size jars.
- Pie filling will fit best in a quart size and is almost perfect for one small pie. Larger fruits such as peach and pear halves fit better in quart size jars.

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- Jar lifter with rubberized grip
- Magnetized lid lifter or canning lid rack
- Long barbeque tongs
- Long spoon
- Long slotted spoon
- Canning funnel

_____ 6. Calculate how much time you will need to complete your canning. Advise everyone that once the canning process starts, they are not to interrupt you unless their hair is on fire or they are bleeding to death! Time variables will be the food you are preparing and recipe instructions. Use the following guide:

- 5 minutes to set up your clean space
- 5 minutes to fill your kettle with water (remember the jars will displace some water)
- 10 minutes to inspect and wash jars, lids, and bands and place them in the kettle of water for sterilization.
- ____ minutes to prepare the food per recipe instructions
- 15-20 minutes to fill and seal jars
- 15 minutes for the water to come to a boil
- ____minutes processing time per recipe instructions
- Total time to allow for canning _____.

_____ 7. Prepare your food according to recipe directions. If this is a hot pack, understand you will have to have your jars heated, sterilized and waiting to be filled by the time the food has been prepared. Timing is important, so the food does not overcook.

If you are using a cold pack method, set your prepared food near the clean space for ease of fill. Hot food should remain hot during the fill process and should remain warming on the stove.

_____ 8. Nearing the end of your food preparation, heat kettle water to sterilize jars,

lids, and bands. When the water is close to boiling, reduce the heat to maintain the hot water.

NOTE: This is the time to remind your family, friends, dogs, etc. to leave you alone while you are canning!

_____ 9. Using a jar lifter, remove one hot jar at a time and set it on the clean space. It may be necessary to use a pot holder to support the jar while you are moving it from the stove to the counter.

_____ 10. Fill the jar, remove any air bubbles with a knife by sliding it around the jar. Add any seasonings or liquid to the fill line as indicated in the recipe (1 inch, ½ inch, ¼ inch).

_____ 11. Use a CLEAN, wet cloth to wipe the rim of the jar and remove any debris. Failing to do this may result in a poor seal.

_____ 12. Use the lid lifter or tongs to remove one lid from the hot water. Avoid touching the inner surface. Place it on top of the jar.

_____ 13. Using the tongs or lid lifter, remove one band from the hot water and screw down the band to seal the jar.

_____ 14. Set the filled jar aside. Fill remaining jars and put all jars in canner at one time- usually 6-7 jars at the most. Don't forget the jar plate on the bottom of the kettle.

_____ 15. Make sure 1-2 inches of water cover all the jars.

_____ 16. Turn up the heat! Bring the water to a rolling boil. Using the kettle lid can facilitate this.

_____ 17. Begin timing when the water is at a full boil. It is acceptable to reduce the heat to a gentle boil but do NOT let the water stop boiling. If this happens, start timing from the beginning.

_____ 18. While the jars are processing, set up the cooling area. The hot, processed jars should not cool directly on a cold counter. Use a clean, dry dishtowel on the counter. Choose a spot that will not be in a draft.

_____ 19. When the timer goes off, turn off the heat. Immediately remove the jars from the kettle and move to the cooling area.

_____ 20. Listen for the “ping” as each jar seals individually. Do not move or touch the jars. Do not play with the button on the lid. This needs to happen without your assistance!

_____ 21. When the jars are completely cold, gently press on top of each lid to check the seal. If it is a good seal, there should be no give to the metal lid. Remove all band. Turn the jars upside down. If there is any leaking, place the jar in the refrigerator to use immediately.

_____ 22. Label and date your jars. Use a Sharpie marker to write directly on the metal lid or make customized labels for your new creations.

_____ 23. Admire what you have accomplished! Send me photos, and I will publish them on www.facebook.com/BestLittleOrganicFarm. That’s right, you’ve earned braggin’ rights!

Reference information from Yes, You Can Can

Clean Space



This is how you set up your Clean Space: Clean, dry dish towel, jar lifter, measure cups and spoons, herbs and spices, canning funnel with sterilized jar, damp, clean cloth for wiping jar rims.

Cold Pack Method Versus Hot Pack Method

Your recipe will determine if you have the option to cold pack your foods.

COLD PACK

- Only optional for certain foods per recipe instructions
- Food is usually packed in raw state and will shrink during processing
- Sometimes used for fragile foods- think fruits and berries

HOT PACK

- Usually used for foods that are not acidic: corn, beans, greens, carrots, meats
- Will cook foods longer during processing

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