CANNING

Canning slows food's natural decomposition, so it's an excellent way to reduce food waste. Home canning doesn't need to be daunting. We've broken it down to a series of simple steps to help you get started. When selecting produce to preserve, choose ripe, high quality fruits and vegetables, and you'll enjoy seasonal flavours all year round.

1 CLEAN JARS

Clean jars and closures in hot, soapy water. If reusing jars, check for nicks, cracks, or uneven rim surfaces. Also be sure your hands are clean, as unwanted bacteria can lead to spoilage.

2 HEAT JARS

Fill jars and canner with water. Bring to a simmer and keep warm (it's not necessary to boil).

3 PREPARE CLOSURES

Put the flat part of the lid in a sieve in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer. Keep warm until ready to use. The screw band doesn't need to be heated but does need to be cleaned. **NOTE:** Do not re-use lids, as the seal will not be effective after the first use.

4 PREPARE RECIPES

NOTE: If this will take more than half an hour, wait to start heating the jars. Be sure to follow recipes exactly.
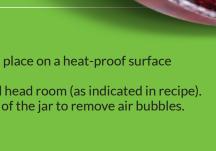
5 FILL JARS

Remove one jar at a time from hot water and place on a heat-proof surface (cutting board or cooling rack).
Using a funnel, ladle food in, leaving required head room (as indicated in recipe).
Slide a non-metallic utensil down the insides of the jar to remove air bubbles.
Wipe jar rim and threads.
Centre lid on the jar.
Screw band on to fingertip tightness.

6 HEAT-PROCESS THE FILLED JARS

There are two methods of heat-processing, depending on whether you are canning high-acid or low-acid foods. Choose which method best fits the foods being canned.

WATER-BATH CANNING

Water-bath canning is suited to high-acid foods like fruit and pickles.

SAFETY TIP: A boiling water canner heats food to 100°C (212°F). The natural acid in the food will prevent botulism bacteria from growing and the heating will kill most yeasts, moulds and bacteria that could be present.

PREPARE WATER-BATH

Return filled jars to canner. Top up water if neccessary to ensure jars are covered by at least an inch.
NOTE: Use a cooling rack or jar lids tied together to keep jars off the bottom of the pot.

BOIL

Bring to boil and start timer (follow time indicated in recipe).

COOL

Once boiling is complete, remove lid, turn off heat and allow to cool 5 minutes. Remove jars and cool completely on a heat proof surface. Once cool, check the seal by pressing the lid with your fingertip. A well-sealed lid does not move or come off easily.

PRESSURE CANNING

Pressure canning is suited to low-acid foods like vegetables, meat, poultry and fish.

SAFETY TIP: Tomatoes are a borderline high-acid food and need an acid, such as lemon juice or vinegar, to be added for safer canning. Mixtures of low and high acid foods, such as spaghetti sauce with meat, vegetables and tomatoes, are considered low-acid foods. The level of temperature needed to kill botulism bacteria for low-acid foods can only be reached by using a pressure canner.

PRESSURE CANNING METHOD

Follow the same method used for water bath canning but using a pressure cooker. Start your processing timer once the canner dial has reached the pressure indicated in the recipe. Allow the canner to cool naturally until the vent pops, and then open very carefully.

WATCH OUT FOR SPOILAGE

- Before opening a jar, examine it closely. A bulging lid or leakage may mean the contents are spoiled.
- When a jar is opened, look for other signs of spoilage, such as spurting liquid, disagreeable odour, change in colour or unusual softness, mushiness or slipperiness of product. If there is even the slightest indication of spoilage, do not taste contents. Dispose of the food so it cannot be eaten by humans or animals.

CAUTION:

- Be sure to follow recipes exactly
- Ensure proper handwashing prior to each and every step.
- Unwashed hands are culprits of bacteria and can cause spoilage in canned goods.
- Be sure to take necessary precautions when working with pressure cookers, or heated/boiling water.