



Did you know . . .

Many fresh foods contain 10 to 30 percent or more of air. How long canned food retains its quality depends on how much air is removed before jars are sealed. The less air, the longer a product lasts.



Home Canning Tips

When your vegetables are ready for canning, there are some tips you need to know to keep people and your food safe! For example, you need to know more about the germ that causes botulism and how to avoid it when canning.



What is Botulism?

Botulism is foodborne illness caused by the germ *Clostridium botulinum*. This germ is typically found in soil and if it gets into your canning jars, it can survive, grow and produce a toxin, even in sealed jars. Botulism is a serious medical emergency as it can affect your nerves, cause paralysis and even result in death.

How to Can Safely

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in five U.S. households can their own food and 65 percent of those households can vegetables.

Most home canning is of fresh fruits and vegetables. But, did you know you can also can fresh cut meat and poultry? Here are some essential tips to guide you when canning at home:

- Do not use a boiling water canning device. These devices won't prevent the growth of harmful bacteria in your jars of food.
- Always use a pressure canning device. When used correctly, pressure canners kill the germ that causes botulism and other foodborne illnesses.
- Maintain freshness. Canning should take place within six to 12 hours of harvest for fresh vegetables and within one day of peak ripening for fresh fruit. If this timeframe is delayed, store produce in a cool, dry location.

- Use caution when canning red meat, poultry and fish. Do not can meat from sickly or diseased animals. After removing the innards, immediately ice fish and seafood after harvest and can them within two days. [USDA's Complete Guide to Home Canning-Guide 5](#) has additional tips on preparing and canning poultry, red meat and seafood.

More Tips for Canning

Use these tips for canning food that is fresh and safe:

- Carefully select and wash food – avoid damaged or split fruit and vegetables and [properly wash](#) them.
- For poultry, red meat and seafood, choose fresh products and cut into suitable bite-size pieces.
- Peel fresh vegetables and fruits with skin before canning.
- Hot pack food for better quality; this means using boiled, steamed or baked product placed into hot jars.
- Add acids like lemon juice or vinegar to foods to prevent spoilage; or salt for poultry, red meat and seafood.
- For red meat, add juices and meat drippings from the pre-cooking process to hot canning jars for added flavor.
- Use acceptable jars and self-sealing lids in your canning process.
- Always process jars in a pressure canner for the correct period of time for the type of food you are canning.

The [USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning](#) is a helpful source of further information and steps to protect your family and enjoy your canned treats! For more information on food safety, visit [NSF's Live Safer Consumer Web page](#).