



Getting Produce and Equipment Ready

Even if fruits or vegetables will be peeled, wash them thoroughly before canning. Garden soil contains some of the bacteria hardest to kill. Wash only small amounts of food at one time under cold running water or in several changes of water. Lift the food out of the water so that the soil that has been washed off won't settle back on the food. Do not soak fruits or vegetables; they may lose flavor and nutritive value. Quickly peel, pit, and slice only as much food as you can process at one time.

Wash canning jars in a dishwasher or in hot, soapy water, and rinse well. Keep the jars hot by leaving them in either hot water or the dishwasher until you are ready to fill them. Jars do not need to be sterilized, as this will be accomplished during processing in a water bath canner or pressure canner.

Wash and rinse canning lids and screw bands. Follow the manufacturer's directions for preparing lids. They may need boiling or holding in boiling water for a few minutes.

Sugar Does More Than Sweeten

Sugar helps canned fruits hold their color, shape, and texture. The sugar moves into the fruit tissue and makes it firmer.

Sugar is usually added to fruits as a syrup. To make syrup, pour 4 cups of water into a saucepan and add:

2 cups of sugar for 5 cups of *thin* syrup;

3 cups of sugar for 5½ cups of *medium* syrup;

4¾ cups of sugar for 6½ cups of *heavy* syrup.

Heat the mixture until the sugar dissolves. Allow about 1 to 1½ cups of syrup for each quart of fruit.

Thin syrup adds fewer calories and costs less to make than heavier syrups.

Also, fruits packed in thin or medium syrup are less likely to float than those packed in heavy syrup.

You can replace as much as half the sugar used in making syrup with light corn syrup or mild-flavored honey. Contrary to popular belief, honey offers no nutritional advantage over ordinary sugar. It contains vitamins and minerals in amounts too small to be nutritionally significant.

You may add sugar directly to very juicy fruits that will be packed hot. Use about ½ cup of sugar for each quart of raw, prepared fruit and heat to boiling. Pack fruit in the juice that cooks out.

You may safely can fruits **without**

sugar. Pack the fruit in extracted juice, in juice from another fruit (for example, bottled apple juice, pineapple juice, or white grape juice) or in water. To extract juice, crush very ripe, sound, juicy fruit and heat to simmering over low heat. Then strain the juice through a jelly bag or a double layer of damp cheesecloth.

Processing times are the same for both unsweetened and sweetened fruits.

Use Salt for Flavor Only

Salt may be added to vegetables and tomatoes before canning. However, it is used only for flavor and can be safely omitted.

Canning Procedures

Pack Food into Jars

There are two methods of packing food into canning jars, raw pack and hot pack. For **raw pack**, pack raw, prepared food into clean, hot jars. Fruits and most vegetables should be packed tightly because they will shrink during processing. However, raw corn, lima beans, and peas should be packed loosely, as they will expand.

For **hot pack**, heat prepared food to boiling or partially cook it. Pack it boiling hot into clean, hot jars. It should be packed fairly loosely.

Although this bulletin gives both raw pack and hot pack directions for most foods, hot pack is recommended for tomatoes and large fruits such as apples, peaches, pears, and plums. Preheating tomatoes or fruits drives air out of the plant tissue and as a result:

- Liquid is less likely to be lost from the jars during processing.

When tomatoes or fruits are packed raw, air is slowly released from the plant tissue during processing. As this air escapes from the jars, liquid is carried with it.

- Tomatoes or fruits are less likely to float to the top of the jar. Raw-packed tomatoes or fruits often float because they still contain air.
- Fruits at the top of the jar are less likely to turn brown. Fruits tend to darken when they are not covered by liquid because they are floating or the liquid level in the jar is too low. Darkening is harmless but unattractive.

Cover raw- or hot-packed food with **boiling-hot** water, cooking liquid, syrup, or juice.

Leave the amount of **headspace**—room at the top of the jar—specified for the product. If too little headspace is allowed (by filling jars too full), the contents of the jars may boil out dur-