

Boiling Water Canning

Follow these steps to safely preserve high-acidity fruits (apples, apricots, tomatoes, etc.), pickled vegetables, jams, and jellies. For this process you will need the following equipment:

- Glass jars with screw-top lids
- Large pot at least 8 cm taller than the jars
- Clean towels
- Tongs or other tool to lift jars in and out of boiling water (Fig. 1)
- Rack or other metal object to keep jars off bottom of pot (Fig. 2)

1. Sterilize equipment

Sterilize jars and lids in boiling water for 20 minutes. Turn upside down on a clean towel and air dry. Leave upside down until ready to use.

2. Prepare food

Follow a recipe for preparing food items. USDA's Complete Guide to Home Canning provides a variety of recipes. The recipe will make food acidic enough to safely preserve.

3. Pack jars

Put the food into jars, leaving 1 cm of space at the top. Remove air bubbles in the jars by inserting a knife, or similar, and wiggling it around. Wipe off the rim of the jar with a clean towel. Heat lids to soften seals. Screw the lid on and tighten, but do not over tighten. When making pickles, liquid should cover the vegetables completely.

4. Boil jars

Lower jars onto a rack, or similar, in a pot of boiling water. Jars should not be touching the pot bottom and the water should be 2 to 4 cm above the top of jars. Cover the pot and boil for 15 minutes. After boiling, turn off the heat, remove the pot lid, and let cool for 5 minutes.

5. Cool jars

Lift jars out of the pot and gently place on a towel. Do not retighten the lids. Leave jars undisturbed for 24 hours.

6. Check seals

Press the middle of the lid with your finger. If the lid springs up when you release it, the lid has not sealed properly. A well-sealed jar lid will appear slightly indented (not bulging). If unsealed, reprocess with a new lid or treat as cooked food--consume within a few days or refrigerate.

7. Label and store

Wipe the jars clean and label with type of food and date. Store in a cool, dry place. Excessive heat will spoil food. Dampness may break seals or corrode metal. Freezing will not spoil food as long as the seal remains intact. If canned food is stored where they may freeze, insulate them with newspaper, or similar. Consume all canned food within one year of canning.



Fig 1. Tongs to lower jar into boiling water
Photo by U of Georgia



Fig 2. Rack alternative
Photo by Erica Strauss Northwest Edible Life