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HOME FOOD PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

In This Issue

- **Welcome!**
- **Plan Ahead!**
- **Roasting Pumpkin Seeds**
- **Preserving Pumpkin or Winter Squash**
- **Storing Canned Foods**
- **Home Canning Meat**
- **Safe Venison Jerky**
- **Refrigerate Cider**
- **Preserving Cranberries**
- **Frequently Asked Questions**

For more food preservation information:

Answer Line:
1-800-854-1678

[U of MN Food Safety—Food Preservation](#)

[National Center for Home Food Preservation](#)

[Order So Easy to Preserve \(5th Edition\)](#)

Welcome!

The busy harvest and food preservation season is winding down. It is a good feeling to know that you will have safe, home-preserved foods during the upcoming year until the “fresh” season arrives again. Many of us are still in the “preservation” mode with meats, poultry, late-season fruits and vegetables, and planning ahead to the holidays.



Plan Ahead!

Take an inventory of your food preservation supplies. As store shelves are transforming into the holidays, it’s a great time to look for food preservation supplies that are “good deals” including:

- Canners
- Lids (don’t forget to mark them with the year “2009”)
- Jars (look for unusual designs or shapes)
- Reliable books (e.g. “Ball® Blue Book of Preserving”)
- Freezer containers and bags
- Accessories (canning rack, funnel, lid magnet, jar lifter, food mill, food scale, Fruit Fresh®, citric acid crystals, labels, kitchen timer, blancher, etc.)



Roasting Pumpkin Seeds

Roasted pumpkin seeds have a nutty flavor and are packed with protein and fiber. A tasty way to get the most out of your Halloween pumpkin is roasting the seeds for snacking. Here’s how to do it:



- Rinse pumpkin seeds under cold water and separate the seeds from the pumpkin strings. (This is easiest just after you’ve removed the seeds from the pumpkin, before the pulp has dried.)
- Place seeds in a single layer on a lightly oiled baking sheet, stirring to coat.
- Sprinkle with salt and bake at 300°F until toasted, about 25 minutes, or until lightly browned. Check and stir after every 10 minutes.

Happy munching!

Preserving Pumpkin or Winter Squash



The only safe instructions for canning pumpkin and winter squash are for cubed flesh in a pressure canner. Cut the flesh into one-inch cubes, boil in water for two minutes, fill jars with cubes and cooking liquid, leaving one-inch headspace. Process in a pressure canner: Pints = 55 minutes (11# - dial gauge/15# - weighted gauge); Quarts = 90 minutes (11# - dial gauge/15# - weighted gauge).

Canning is not recommended for pumpkin butter or mashed/pureed pumpkin or winter squash. The density of the product prevents adequate heat transfer to the center of the jar and might allow harmful bacteria to survive.

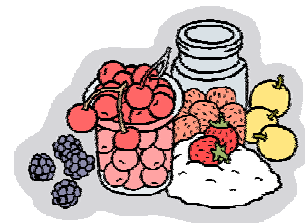
Freezing is the only safe method for preserving pumpkin purees, butters and preserves. Select full-colored mature pumpkin with fine texture. Wash, cut into cooking-size sections and remove seeds. Cook until soft in boiling water, in steam, in a pressure cooker, or in an oven. When soft, remove pulp from rind and mash. To cool, place pan containing pumpkin in cold water and stir occasionally. Pack into rigid containers leaving ½-inch headspace, and freeze.

Pickling pumpkin or squash is possible but cannot be safely canned by either the boiling water or pressure canning methods. Treat pickled pumpkin as a fresh food and refrigerate the product.



Storing Canned Foods

It's a good feeling to see all the jars of food you've preserved this year. But, you still have a few rows of canned goods left over from the past two years. Can home-canned foods become unsafe?



Yes, home-canned food can become unsafe.....if not stored properly.

Home-canned foods that are exposed to temperatures over 95°F may become unsafe. Microorganisms tolerate and will grow at high temperatures. If there are any microorganisms still present in the jar, they may grow and make the food unsafe or change the food so other microorganisms can grow.

If home-canned foods are stored in sunlight, they may get very hot. Once the food inside the jar gets hot, the air inside the headspace can expand and break open the seal and allow microorganisms to grow and make the food unsafe.

If acidic foods (pickled or fermented products or some juices) are kept for a long time, the acid may eat away at the lid and result in pinholes that allow microorganisms to get into the jar. Throw away any home-canned foods with damaged or flaking metal on the lid.

Lids on home-canned foods stored in a damp place may also rust through and allow microorganisms to get into the food.

To store home-canned foods properly, follow these tips:

- Remove screw bands, wash the lid and jar to remove food residue, rinse and dry jars. Label and date jars.
- Store home-canned foods in a cool, dry place away from kitchen ranges, furnaces, radiators and steam pipes.
- Freezing of canned foods will not cause spoilage unless jars become unsealed and unsafe. Freezing and thawing will soften the food. If you must store jars where they may freeze, wrap them in newspapers, place them in heavy cartons and cover with more newspapers and blankets.

Home Canning Meat

If you have a history of farming in your family, you may have tasted or heard of canned meat. Farm families often processed their animals in the fall and canned the meat for winter use.

When canning beef, pork, chicken, fish or game meat such as venison, **never** use any canning method but pressure cooking and for the times recommended. Meat, poultry and fish are low acid foods that must be processed in a pressure canner to reduce the risk of botulism.

Begin by selecting high quality meat and keep it cool until ready to can. Trim the fat off meat before canning. Excess fat left on the meat will melt and rise to the top during processing. If the fat comes in contact with the sealing edge of the lid, the jar may not seal.

Meat is processed in pint or quart jars. The processing time ranges from 65 minutes to 90 minutes at 11 or 15 pounds pressure, depending on the variety of meat, jar size and type of pressure canner. Be sure to follow a recommended recipe for the specific product you are canning.

For more information, visit the University of Minnesota Extension publication: [Safe Home Canning of Meats](#).



Safe Venison Jerky

In the past, the preparation and heating recommendations for making jerky have been quite general. More recently, illnesses due to Salmonella and *E. coli* O157:H7 from homemade jerky have resulted in updated recommendations.



All safe methods for making venison or beef jerky now require cooking the meat before placing it in the dehydrator. The USDA recommends that meat be heated to 160°F before dehydrating to reduce bacteria that can make us sick.

One method developed by Colorado State University, the Hot Pickle Cure method, raw meat strips are simmered 1½ to 2 minutes in a boiling marinade. Precooking in marinade destroys bacteria, shortens the drying time, and makes a more tender jerky. For more information on this method and other pre-treatment options visit [Making Safe Jerky at Home](#).

Follow by drying meats in a dehydrator or oven that will maintain a temperature of at least 130 - 140°F throughout the drying process.



Refrigerate Cider

Apple cider should be pasteurized and kept refrigerated to prevent growth of spoilage yeasts and molds. Although pasteurization (heat treatment) kills many spoilage microorganisms, there is a good chance there are still spoilage organisms present. Those "leftover" organisms may grow rapidly at room temperature. To be safe, it is a good idea to buy cider that is refrigerated.

Preserving Cranberries

Cranberries were fruits used by Native Americans as a food, clothing dye, and to heal wounds. Today, cranberries are grown in many northern states including Minnesota. Harvesting begins in September through November. The fresh fruit is available in stores between October and January, usually in 12-ounce bags (equal to 3 cups of whole berries).

Berries can be stored in the original bag in the refrigerator crisper for up to 4 weeks. To freeze the berries, spread clean berries on a cookie sheet and freeze. When frozen, package in freezer bags or containers. Use within one year. Or, wash the berries and place directly into freezer bags or containers and freeze.

Raw cranberries are very tart and bland-tasting but include them as fresh or dried fruit in recipes to add color and texture. Use fresh cranberries in a variety of home-preserved items like: [Spicy Cranberry Salsa](#), [Cranberry Orange Chutney](#), and [Cranberry Conserve](#).



Frequently Asked Questions

- *Can commercial spaghetti sauce jars that look like canning jars (stamped with Atlas or Mason) be reused for canning?* No, a coating is applied to these jars to reduce scratching and scuffing and if the coating is scratched, the jar becomes weaker and can easily break when used for canning. The lighter-weight of these jars could make them unsafe for home canning.
- *Can smoked sausages be canned?* Yes. Follow the instructions from the National Center for Home Food Preservation for [ground or chopped meat](#)). The only concern is that the final process product might be tough if the sausages have been previously cooked before the canning processing. Also, it is very important to add an appropriate liquid depending on the desired flavor because the liquid helps with the heat transfer.
- *I've seen steam canners in the stores. Why don't I see instructions for using this canner?* Research on steam canners has found that food canned in them is not heated to a temperature as high as when the same food is canned in a boiling water bath canner. The lower temperature results in under-processing and is considered a risk for spoilage. The National Center for Home Food Preservation is currently doing research on this canner, but at this time, home-canners are encouraged to not use this canner.

