Canned Meat for Good Taste and Convenience

In our 2013 newsletter survey, a number of you told us you want to know more about canning and preserving meat (i.e. beef, pork, poultry, venison, wild game, etc.).

Canned meat used to be called the “emergency meat”. When visitors stopped in unexpectedly, canned meat served as an instant home-cooked meal. Today, “emergency meat” is again a great convenience for busy lives.

Meat is processed in jars. Sometimes a small amount of liquid is used or the meat boils in its own juice which tenderizes the meat. Canned meat can be used as a base for stroganoff, stews, soups, hot dish, chili; served over potatoes, rice, noodles or heated for sandwiches or tacos.

When canning meat, follow these tips for a safe convenient food:

- Safety first! Meat is a low acid food and must always be processed in a pressure canner to reduce the risk of botulism.

- Choose high-quality meat and keep it cool until ready to can. Trim away areas of bruising or heavy gristle. Poultry may be canned with, or without bones.

- Meat is best if canned fresh. However, if you freeze meat prior to canning, trim visible fat to avoid off flavors. Wrap tightly in freezer wrap and freeze for up to six months. Before canning, completely thaw meat in the refrigerator. Once meat is thawed, can it within 1 to 2 days.

- Trim any fat off the meat before canning. Excess fat left on meat will melt and rise to the top during processing. The jar may not seal if fat comes in contact with the lid's sealing edge.

- Meat can either be raw packed or hot packed processed in pint or quart jars. Processing time ranges from 75 to 90 minutes at 11 or 15 pounds pressure.

- Always bring home canned meat to a boil for 10 minutes prior to serving. Do not eat directly out of the jar.

For specific canning methods, visit the University of Minnesota Extension website: [http://z.umn.edu/gsa](http://z.umn.edu/gsa).
Making Safe Jerky at Home

Meat jerky has been around for centuries. Today, we enjoy it as a convenient snack. It is very important to reach a sufficient temperature to kill pathogens that may contribute to a foodborne illness from home-dried jerky. University research has been conducted with home-style dehydrators to develop safe jerky-making methods. Follow these tips for safe home-dried jerky:

- Use only lean meats in excellent condition. Trim visible fat.
- Keep raw meats and juices away from other foods. Marinate meats in the refrigerator, not on the counter.
- Check the temperature of your dehydrator before drying jerky. Do not rely on the dehydrator’s temperature settings. Check the dehydrator by placing the metal stem of a dial thermometer between 2 dehydrator trays so that you can read the dial outside the dryer. Turn on the dehydrator and allow the temperature to stabilize. Adjust the thermostat as necessary to get the desired temperature. Current research recommends drying temperatures should be 145° or above. Temperatures below 145° may produce an unsafe product.
- For best quality and safe results, dry meat at 145°-155° for 4-6 hours followed by heating in a pre-heated 275° oven for 10 minutes. Always include the post-drying oven-heating treatment as a safety precaution.
- Dehydrate until a test piece cracks but does not break when it is bent.


Pumpkin and Winter Squash

Not only do pumpkins and squash decorate our homes in the fall, they can be preserved by canning and freezing.

**Freezing:** To freeze pumpkin and squash as a puree or sauce, cook until soft in boiling water or bake in an oven. Remove the pulp and mash or put through a food mill or food processor. Cool and freeze in rigid containers leaving headspace. Package in the amounts you will use in a recipe. You can also pack it in zip-type freezer bags that have had excess air removed and place on a tray so they freeze flat. This will make them easier to stack when frozen.

Some stir-fry recipes and hot dishes call for cubes of squash. The Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service recommends blanching washed and peeled cubes of raw squash for 3 minutes, drain and chill in cold water for 3 minutes. Drain thoroughly and spread in a single layer on trays. When completely frozen, put in freezer bags or container. Add the frozen cubes directly to your recipe.

**Canning:** Because mashed or pureed pumpkin is too dense for adequate heat penetration to the center of the jar, the only safe method to can pumpkin or squash is to cut the peeled vegetable into 1-inch cubes and boil for 2 minutes in water. Pack cubes into canning jars with boiling cooking liquid, and leave 1-inch headspace. Process in a pressure canner at 11 pounds in a dial gauge canner or 15 pounds in a weighted gauge canner. Process pints for 55 minutes or quarts for 90 minutes.

Because of pumpkin and squash’s low acidity, pressure canning is required!
TLC for Canning Equipment

With frost in the air, most food preservers are storing canning equipment until 2014. Before packing up, take time to give equipment a little TLC.

**Pressure Canners:** Clean the vent pipe and safety valve. Draw a clean string or pipe cleaner through the vent opening.

Clean the rubber gasket. Under normal usage, gaskets should be replaced every three years. Some canners use a metal-to-metal seal instead. Check that the metal-to-metal edge is smooth and free of grease.

Clean the darkened surface on the inside of an aluminum canner by filling it above the dark line with a mixture of 1 tablespoon cream of tartar to each quart of water. Heat the mixture to boiling and boil covered until the dark deposits disappear. Empty canner and wash with hot soapy water and dry.

Hard water deposits can be removed by the cream of tartar method or boiling vinegar.

Store canner with crumpled clean paper towels in the bottom and around the rack. This will absorb moisture and odors. Place lid upside down on the canner. Never store a canner with the lid on and sealed.

**Jars and screw bands:** As you empty jars, check for chips or breaks; wash and store in a safe place. Scale or hard water film can be removed by soaking jars for several hours in a mixture of 1 cup of vinegar in 1 gallon of water.

Store jars upside down or cover to prevent dust and insects from entering the jars.

Do not leave the screw bands on the jars but store them in a dry place. Screw bands can be reused unless they are rusted.

**Enjoy Apples all Year**

When choosing apples, University of Minnesota Extension has a great site with photos, information and suggested uses of various apple varieties [http://z.umn.edu/early](http://z.umn.edu/early).

Enjoy apples all year by freezing, canning or drying.

Freezing apples is simple. Wash, peel and cut apples into the desired size. To prevent browning, dissolve ½ teaspoon of ascorbic acid in 3 tablespoons of water and sprinkle over the apples. Apples can be frozen with or without sugar. If desired, mix ½ cup of sugar with 1 quart or 1¼ pounds of fruit. Pack into containers or bags, seal and freeze.

Apples can also be canned as slices in a syrup pack or in water. Directions can be found at [http://bit.ly/19q2qNr](http://bit.ly/19q2qNr).

Homemade applesauce is a treat and can be frozen or canned. Cook apples until tender (approximately 5-20 minutes, depending on maturity and variety). If desired, add 1/8 cup of sugar per quart of sauce or to taste. Pack into containers with 1-inch headspace, seal and freeze. Applesauce can also be canned [http://bit.ly/1gtSntZ](http://bit.ly/1gtSntZ).

Dried apples are a great snack and can be added to baked foods or cereals. Cut the apples into rings, wedges or chips. See drying instructions in the August, 2013 issue of the “Home Food Preservation Newsletter” [http://z.umn.edu/august](http://z.umn.edu/august).
Pie Freezing Tips

Now is the time to plan ahead for holiday pie baking with these freezing tips:

- **Pie Crust.** Freeze baked or unbaked crusts. Freeze in pie pans to prevent damage. Bake unbaked crust directly from the freezer at 475° or fill and bake as usual.

- **Unbaked fruit pie.** Make as usual and add one extra tablespoon of thickener. Do not cut vents in top crust until ready to bake. Freeze in the pan. Package. The bottom crust tends to get soggy, but fruit flavor is fresher. Bake without thawing at 450° for 15-20 minutes. Reduce to 375° for 20-30 minutes or until brown. Place the pie on a cookie sheet to help catch overflowing juices.

- **Pumpkin Pie.** Prepare as usual and chill filling and fill unbaked, chilled crust. Bake without thawing at 400°, 10 minutes. Reduce to 325° to finish baking.

- **Baked Pie.** A baked pie that was frozen can be served without reheating; thaw it in its wrapping in the refrigerator.

NEW “Creative” Safe Salsa Recipe

When making salsa, most people want to be creative but they run the risk of creating an unsafe recipe. This summer, the National Center for Home Food Preservation developed a generic salsa recipe that allows for safe creativity and is canned in a water bath canner. The recipe, “Choice Salsa”, is available on the National Center for Home Food Preservation’s website: [http://bit.ly/1bK0jrr](http://bit.ly/1bK0jrr).

Frequently Asked Questions

**How long will home-canned foods be safe?**

As a general rule, properly canned food stored in a cool, dry place will retain best eating quality (including nutrition) for at least 1 year. Canned food stored in a warm place near hot pipes, a range, a furnace, or in indirect sunlight may lose some of its eating quality in a few weeks or months, depending on the temperature. Dampness may corrode cans or metal lids and cause leakage so the food will spoil.

**What is the best way to store fresh vegetables?**

For the best quality and nutritional value, check out the following [Harvesting and storing home garden vegetables](http://z.umn.edu/gsi) chart with storage suggestions [http://z.umn.edu/gsi](http://z.umn.edu/gsi).

**How much bulk pectin do I use for jams and jellies?**

In the past couple years, the makers of Ball® pectin is available in bulk. To help consumers decide how much pectin to use, they created an online [Pectin Calculator](http://bit.ly/16zO9NF). Check it out at [http://bit.ly/16zO9NF](http://bit.ly/16zO9NF).

Photos from National Food Preservation Center, office.com

For more food safety information visit our website: [extension.umn.edu/food-safety](http://extension.umn.edu/food-safety).

If you would like to stop receiving the Home Food Preservation newsletter, please email schmi374@umn.edu.