

Ask an Expert – Yes, You Can Can! 13 Food Preservation Pointers

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While many people know and understand basic freezing and dehydrating methods for preserving foods, it becomes a different story when they contemplate bottling.

Food preservation is a science- and research-based practice. It is different from creative cooking. When preserving food with water-bath or pressure canning, a kitchen must be turned into a laboratory by following instructions exactly and using proper procedures. That is why many home canners are disappointed to learn their favorite fresh salsa or grandma's stew is not recommended for home canning, nor are things like butter, bacon, or pureed squash.

Here are 13 tips to help guide both the novice and the seasoned home preservation enthusiast this canning season:

1. Follow canning directions exactly.
2. Always use up-to-date, scientifically tested recipes, and only use approved canning methods (boiling water bath or pressure).
3. Adjust altitude by adding more time to water bath canning or increasing pressure for pressure-canned products.
4. Be sure that canned products have a proper lid seal.

5. Don't add extra starch, flour, or other thickeners to a recipe.
6. Don't add extra onions, chilies, bell peppers, or other vegetables to salsas.
7. Be sure to vent the pressure canner properly.
8. Get your dial-type pressure canner gauges tested annually.
9. Don't use an oven instead of a water bath for processing.
10. Be sure to acidify canned tomatoes properly.
11. Do not cool the pressure canner under running water.
12. Do not let food prepared for "hot pack" processing cool in jars before placing them in the canner for processing.
13. Be aware of recent reports of vinegar in grocery stores labeled at 4% acidity. The vinegar percentage needs to be 5% to be safe, so be sure to check the label.

If you have questions, the best option for finding safe, scientifically based answers for proper food preservation is to [contact your local USU Extension office](#). Additional canning information can be found at canning.usu.edu. Or check out our Preserve the Harvest online course [here](#). Use code PRESERVE23 for a \$5 discount.

The satisfaction of preserving food is well worth the time and effort it takes. With instruction from approved resources and a dash of common sense, this season may be the best ever for adding to your food storage shelves!

Contact

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