

Ask an Expert – Tips for Preserving the Harvest Safely

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Whether you're a long-time canner or a first-time food preserver, it's important to stay up to date on best canning practices. There is always something new, and possibly safer, to learn and apply to your own kitchen/canning laboratory.

But before you get started, be aware that there is not room for creativity in canning. Food preservation is a science- and research-based practice. Even though Grandma or Uncle Don may have "always done it this way," using researched and tested recipes with proper procedures will bring you the safest results. Few things are more discouraging than investing time, money, and effort into growing, harvesting, and preserving food, only to have it spoil or cause illness. In addition, deviating from a tested recipe can alter the storability and flavor of your food.

Once your food is processed, then you can get creative. For example, make tomato sauce as the tested recipe states, store it properly, and then when you open it, season it to your desired taste to make a marinara sauce, enchilada sauce, or tomato soup.

As always, the [USU Extension Food Preservation website](#) has free, tested recipes, how-to guides, and best practices, as well as the answers to questions like:

[Can I use sugar substitutes in jam recipes?](#)

[Can I leave the salt out of a recipe?](#)

[Do I have to have a pressure canner?](#)

[How long will my canned foods last?](#)

[Are there foods that are not safe to can or bottle?](#)

If you have other canning questions, the best option for finding safe, scientifically based answers for proper food preservation is to contact your local USU Extension office. [Click here](#) for office locations and contact information. You can also check out Extension's [Preserve the Harvest online course](#).

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