

OTHER CANNING REMINDERS

- if you're using old jars, check each one thoroughly for any chips, nicks, or hairline cracks. Use only those in perfect condition.
- if you're using old jars with the wire bail closing, check that the dome on top of the lid hasn't worn down and the wire is still strong enough to hold the lid tightly in place.
- never reuse metal lids or rubber rings. Don't keep unused rings too long either, or they may not provide a good seal.
- only use jars specifically designed for canning. Canning lids may fit pickle or mayonnaise jars, but this glass isn't made to withstand the heat processing.
- if the water level in a boiling water bath drops below the 5 cm mark, add more boiling water. Pour it in between the jars, not on top of them.
- for even results, process only one type of food and one size of jar at one time.
- try to use food of equal ripeness in one batch.
- fruit may be canned without sugar although the flavor, texture, and color won't be the same. Use water or fruit juice instead of syrup.
- artificial sweetener can be added if desired, after the jar is opened.
- follow sealing directions carefully. Lids that require a rubber ring should be tightened, then turned back a quarter inch so air can escape during processing. Carefully tighten it again after processing. The new metal lids which already contain the sealing compound, should be just barely tightened, NOT turned back and NOT retightened after processing.
- check for a proper seal in jars with a rubber ring by gently tilting the container until the food is against the lid. If no liquid drips out and no air bubbles appear in the jar, the seal is good.
- cool hot jars away from drafts, but don't cover them with a towel. That may slow down cooling enough to cause "flat sour" – a harmless but undesirable condition where the food has a sourish taste.
- don't store jars upside down. The pressure of the food against the lid may be enough to break the seal.
- rely on commercially made vinegar for preserving. Home-made kinds may not have enough acetic acid to protect the food against microorganisms.

TO AVOID FRUIT OR TOMATOES FLOATING TO THE TOP OF THE JAR:

- avoid canning over-ripe produce.
- process for the full amount of time indicated.
- use the recommended strength of syrup.
- pack the produce firmly into the jar.

TO PREVENT DISCOLORATION IN FRUIT:

- use ascorbic acid (vitamin C) with light colored fruit.
- work in one canner-load amounts and handle the food gently.
- get rid of all air bubbles before sealing the jar and add enough liquid to cover the food. Leave 1 cm (½ in) headspace with fruit.
- process the food for the full amount of time.
- store in a dark, cool, dry place. If it's not dark, cover the jars with newspaper or put them in a cardboard box.

TO ENSURE GETTING A GOOD SEAL:

- avoid using jars with nicks, chips or hairline cracks.
- carefully wipe all bits of food from the rim of the jar.
- leave the proper amount of headspace.
- use new metal lids or rubber rings each time.
- be sure the screw band hasn't stretched, rusted, or been bent.

TOMATO SAUCE

Many people can tomato sauce, but adding other vegetables to the tomatoes dilutes the concentration of acid. This could mean trouble. The following recipe was developed particularly for boiling water bath processing. Don't change the proportions. Sugar, oregano, basil, and other herbs may easily be added before serving.

ALL PURPOSE TOMATO VEGETABLE SAUCE

3 L washed, peeled, quartered tomatoes
250 mL chopped celery 15 mL salt
125 mL chopped onion 7 mL citric acid OR
125 mL chopped green pepper 100 mL bottled lemon juice
Prepare jars, lids, and boiling water bath.
In a large, non-aluminum saucepan, simmer all ingredients until the sauce reaches the desired thickness (½ to 1½ h).
Pack into hot, clean jars, leaving a 2 cm (¾ in) headspace.
REMOVE all air bubbles from jars. Measure headspace and readjust amount of sauce if necessary.
WIPE the rim of jars clean.
CENTER and apply lids.
PROCESS in boiling water bath (40 min for pints, 45 min for quarts).

You may have been canning for years in ways contrary to these suggestions . . . but is it really worth taking the chance of spoiled food . . . or worse, causing illness in the family? Canning isn't difficult but it takes time – and it needs care in every step along the way.