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Get Canning Equipment Ready

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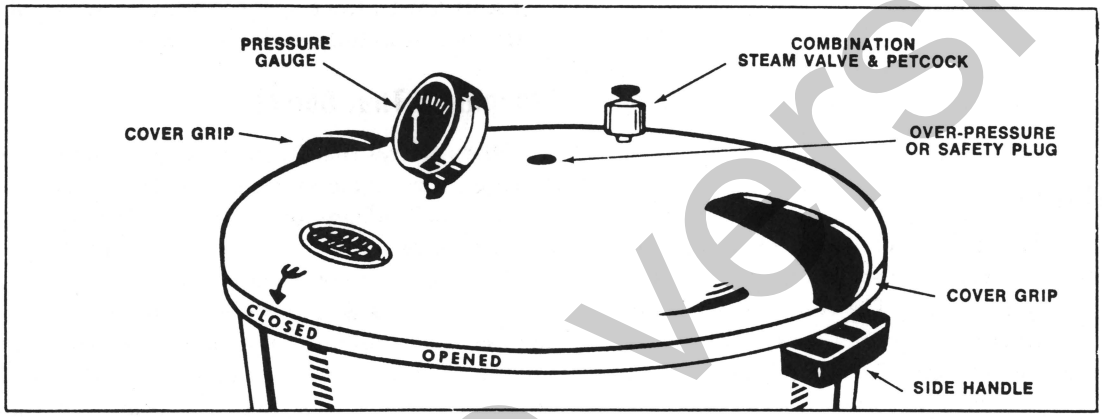


Steam-Pressure Canner

A steam-pressure canner insures safe canning of vegetables and meats.

For safe operation of your canner, clean the petcock or safety-valve openings by drawing a string through them. Do this at the beginning of canning season and often during use. An accurate pressure gauge is necessary for processing at correct temperature. A weighted gauge needs to be clean. It does not require other adjustments for testing. A dial gauge, or one with a core that rises as pressure increases inside the canner, old or new, should be checked before canning season and during it. Have the gauge tested at a hardware store or at the County Extension Center. Have it retested in midsummer if you do much canning. If your gauge is off more than two pounds and cannot be adjusted, it should be replaced with a new one. If it is not off more than two pounds you can correct it in processing. For example, if your gauge registers one pound high and you are to process something at 10 pounds pressure, process the food at 11 pounds. If you gauge registers one pound low, process the food at nine pounds on your gauge. Other adjustments can be made up or down, one or two pounds.

Thoroughly clean the canner. Wash it with soapy water, rinse, and dry. Do not put the gauge in water. Wipe it with a clean cloth, then dry it well. Turn the lid upside down when you remove it from the hot canner to allow steam to rise from the gauge. Dry the canner thoroughly before it is stored. Two paper towels or paper napkins stored inside the canner help to absorb moisture that may occur during long storage.

Water-Bath Canner

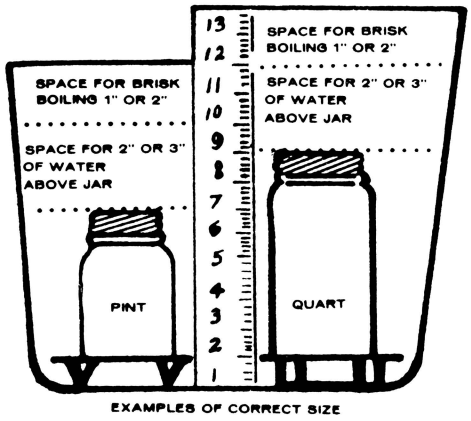
Any deep metal container may be used as a boiling-water-bath canner if it is deep enough to have a rack under the jars and three to five inches above the tops of the jars. The water must be one inch above the tops of the jars at all times to allow for brisk boiling. A close-fitting lid holds heat in and reduces water evaporation. As water boils away it must be replaced to keep water level above the tops of the jars for the recommended processing time.

Glass Jars

Be sure all jars and lids are free from cracks, chips, dents, rust, or other defects.

Jars and lids must be clean. Avoid scratching the glass with a sharp object that could score the glass and cause it to break later. Avoid bumping the jars. Glass can be "bruised."

Lids and rubber rings also must be clean. Rubber rings, if not new, must be firm, strong and pliable to seal. One-piece lids must have a true shape at the lower edge where they seal.



Use a kettle deep enough to allow 3 to 5 inches above the top of the jar.

Closing Glass Jars

Two-piece lids have a flat metal with a sealing compound. The compound seals against the top of the jar as it is held in place by a screw band. The compound must be pliable for the lid to seal. Treat the flats according to manufacturer's directions. Some say boil, others say dip in boiling water. Flats with a separate rubber ring often don't seal well.

Screw bands that are in good condition and not rusted may be reused. Screw the band firmly on the jar before processing. It seals automatically as it cools. Remove the rings after the jars have cooled thoroughly to prevent rust that makes later removal difficult.

Porcelain-lined zinc caps are one piece with a separate rubber sealing ring that fits over the neck of the jar and seals on the lower rim. That rim must be free of nicks, cracks or rough surfaces. They may be reused as long as they are in good condition. These lids are screwed on tight, then turned back one-fourth inch to allow the jar to vent (air to escape). When the jar is removed from the pressure canner or water-bath-canner, it must be re-tightened. As you retighten the lid, cover the entire jar and lid with a cloth to protect yourself in case the jar were to break or hot juice were to spew out.

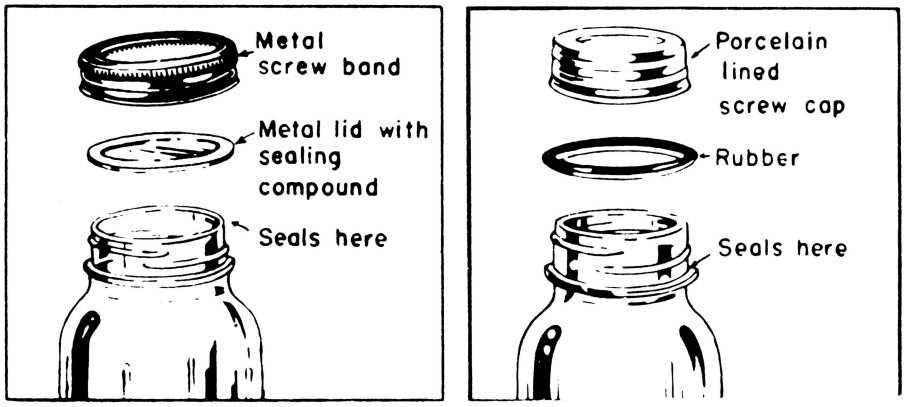
Other one-piece lids have a sealing compound inside that seals similar to a two-piece lid. Follow manufacturer's instructions carefully with these lids.

Equipment That Serves

Sharp knives that fit the food, the user's hand, and a cutting board make canning easier and quicker.

A funnel and ladle or dipper aid in filling jars and may prevent burns.

Other equipment beneficial for certain foods include: a strainer or food mill suitable to sieve pulp such as applesauce, pumpkin and tomato juice; large kettles with lids for preheating food; large clean cloths for handling hot jars; tongs to remove jars from hot water; and measuring equipment for salt and other ingredients.



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