

# Food Safety Tips for Home Canning

## Introduction

Home canning is an excellent way to preserve food product freshness. If you are considering using home canning, there are things you can do to ensure that your food products are safe.

## Know the risks

Canned foods that are not prepared properly at home can lead to botulism, a deadly form of food poisoning caused by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. Botulism spores are hard to kill and are extremely heat-resistant. Foods contaminated with *Clostridium botulinum* toxin may not look or smell spoiled. Do not eat from cans or bottles that are dented, leaking or have bulging ends, as this could mean that the contents are unsafe.



## Safe home canning practices

Home canning requires special equipment including heavy-duty glass jars, metal lids, metal rings, metal bands, boiling water canners and pressure canners. Always read the manufacturer's instructions for your canning equipment and follow recipes carefully. *Changing ingredients and cooking times can result in unsafe food.*

Before you start canning, determine the acid level of the food:

High-Acid Foods	Low Acid Foods
Fruit	Most fresh vegetables except tomatoes
Jams, jellies, marmalades	Meat, and poultry
Fruit butters	Seafood – fish and shellfish
Pickles and sauerkraut	Soup and milk
Tomatoes with added lemon juice or vinegar	Spaghetti sauce with meat, vegetables and tomatoes

**1-800-361-5653**

TTY (for those with hearing disabilities) **1-866-252-9933**



York Region Health Connection

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## High-acid foods (require a boiling water canner)

High-acid foods include those with a pH of less than 4.6.

## Low-acid foods (require a pressure canner)

Low-acid foods include those with a pH of more than 4.6. Tomatoes are borderline high-acid food and require an acid, such as lemon juice or vinegar, to be added for safe canning. Mixtures of low- and high-acid foods, such as spaghetti sauce with meat, vegetables and tomatoes, are considered low-acid foods and require a pressure canner to destroy botulism-causing bacteria.

## Food pH Chart

<b>Alkaline pH</b>	<b>11</b>	Ammonia
	<b>10</b>	Soap
	<b>9.0</b>	
	<b>8.0</b>	Egg whites, olives
<b>Neutral pH</b>	<b>7.0</b>	Water, milk
<b>Acidic pH</b>	<b>6.0</b>	Meat, melons, cheese
	<b>5.0</b>	Vegetables, bread
	<b>4.0</b>	Tomatoes, fruits/jams
	<b>3.0</b>	Orange juice, pears, plums
	<b>2.0</b>	Vinegar, lemon/lime

Adapted from "How do you know if your food is safe to sell?" Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech

## Be Food Safe in your home canning practices

### Clean

- Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Wash fruits and vegetables, including those with rinds, thoroughly with clean, cool running water before preparing them.
- Clean and sanitize all work surfaces, utensils, and equipment. Keep them clean during all stages of the canning process to avoid cross-contamination.
- Sterilize your jars. This means washing them in hot soapy water and then boiling the jars according to recipe instructions.
- Inspect jars to make sure they are free of cracks and chips.

### Separate

- Use one cutting board for washed, fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Only use new self-sealing lids and make sure the sealing compound is not damaged before use. Screw bands may be re-used.
- Discard any rusted or dented bands.

### Cook

- Use only current, tested home canning recipes. Never substitute the jar size or the amounts of ingredients that are recommended in the recipe.
- Use the appropriate heat-processing method according to the acidity of the food.
- During processing, check that adequate cooking or heating temperatures are maintained.

### Chill

- Label and date all home canned foods before storing.
- Store in a cool, dry place. For best quality, use within one year from the date they were made.
- Once the container has been opened, refrigerate leftovers.

## Food-borne illness

According to Health Canada, symptoms of botulism usually appear within 12 to 36 hours after eating contaminated food. These symptoms may include:

- Nausea
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Double vision
- Fatigue
- Dryness in the throat and nose
- Dizziness

These symptoms will usually last two hours to 14 days but some can last longer.

### Serious health risks can include:

- Respiratory failure
- Paralysis
- Death

Call 9-1-1 to seek immediate medical attention if you experience these symptoms.

Persons at higher risk for serious health effects include pregnant women, children under the age of five, adults over the age of 60 and people with weakened immune systems.

For more information, contact York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933.



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