



# Home Food Preservation Newsletter

**June 2010**

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**For more food preservation information:**

Answer Line:  
 1-800-854-1678

[Food Preservation Mini Module Series](#)

[U of MN Food Safety—Food Preservation](#)

[National Center for Home Food Preservation](#)

[Order So Easy to Preserve \(5th Edition\)](#)

## Welcome!

It's time to look forward to another food preservation season. Before you are up to your eyeballs in fresh produce, now is the time to prepare for the upcoming season. Take a look at your equipment, take an inventory of what you have and don't have, clean out your storage spaces and review your skills. This newsletter will help you get organized so you are ready to preserve, preserve, preserve!

This is the first issue of the second season of the "Home Food Preservation Newsletter". University of Minnesota Food Science Extension Educators are creating this newsletter as a way to reach you with up-to-date research-based food preservation information. Check the following website to view past issues of this newsletter: <http://z.umn.edu/z9>

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter electronically, please send a message to: [schmi374@umn.edu](mailto:schmi374@umn.edu)



## Get Ready

Organizing yourself and your equipment before the food preservation season begins will make sure you will preserve your produce safely, prevent frustration and accidents, and save you time.



- Inspect jars to see if they are free of cracks or nicks. Do you have enough jars?
- Check that you have enough two-piece lids. Lids should be within a couple years old and screw bands should not be rusty.
- Make sure your equipment is sparkling clean.
- If you will can high-acid foods, check your boiling water bath canner. Do you have a rack and does it need cleaning?
- If you plan to can low-acid foods such as vegetables or meats, you must use a pressure canner. Check the rubber gasket and replace if needed. Manufacturers recommend replacing rubber parts every 2 to 3 years because steam dries out the rubber.
- Make sure the safety valve, vent and canner edges are squeaky clean.
- If you have a dial-gauge, get it tested now (see the following article for testing information).
- Make sure your food preservation resources and recipes were published after 1994 when processing times and methods were changed for many canned products.

## Check Dial Gauges for Accuracy

If you plan to can low-acid foods such as vegetables or meats, you will use a pressure canner with either a dial gauge or weighted gauge. Dial gauge canners show the pressure inside the canner and the pressure is controlled by adjusting the heat.

Every year, the dial gauge should be checked to make sure it is reading the pressure correctly. Gauges that read high cause under-processing and may result in unsafe food. Low readings cause over-processing. Pressure adjustments can be made if the gauge reads up to 2 pounds high or low. Replace gauges that differ by more than 2 pounds.



Check your County University of Minnesota Extension office to see if testing is done locally. If not, wrap the gauge securely and send to:

National Presto Industries, Inc.  
3925 N Hastings Way  
Eau Claire, WI 54703  
(Phone: 1-800-877-0441)

Presto only charges for shipping but does not charge for checking the gauge.

The weighted gauge does not require testing.



## First In First Out



This is the time of year, before the busy preservation season, to review the contents of your freezer. We are always going to remember what the home preserved packages are and when we put them in the freezer! But as we find "surprises," mystery packages of frozen produce, we vow to do better this season with dating and labeling.

Date marking and labeling of the package allows us to practice **First in – First out**, an inventory rotation process to ensure quality frozen products. Also, keeping a written freezer inventory, be it a notebook or a chart, is a helpful tool for freezer management. Visit <http://z.umn.edu/zu> for a Freezer Inventory chart you can implement as you begin to freeze fruits and vegetables this season.

Organizing your freezer into sections for different types of foods will help to save time and energy as you search for a particular food. You can divide your freezer with baskets, wire racks or shelves.

Remember for best quality frozen foods, maintain your freezer temperature at 0° F or below.



## Create Jams and Jellies from Frozen Fruit

The following tips will help create successful jams and jellies from frozen fruit or juice:

- The best frozen fruits for jams or jellies are blueberries, red and black currants, gooseberries and rhubarb.
- Before freezing fruit, measure the fruit and label the container. Many fruits collapse as they thaw and may create an inaccurate measure.
- Jams and jellies from frozen fruit and juice are better if no sugar is added to the fruit and juice before freezing.
- When freezing fruit for jelly or jams, use 1/4 under-ripe and 3/4 ripe fruit.
- Thaw frozen fruit in the refrigerator until only a few ice crystals remain. Follow directions for the type of jam you are making and follow the recommended proportions of fruit (measured before freezing), pectin and sugar.



When making jelly from frozen juice, thaw frozen juice in the refrigerator overnight. Measure juice and use it immediately in recommended proportions with sugar and pectin.



## Canning Berries



Canned berries are reminiscent of the days when families enjoyed "sauce" with their meal - be it peach or pear sauce or raspberry or gooseberry sauce. Canned berries along with being enjoyed as a sauce, can be used in fruit cobblers, thickened for pie filling or sweetened for a tasty ice cream topping.

When canning *soft* berries – raspberries, blackberries, loganberries – plan to Raw pack for best quality. A Hot pack is recommended for *firm* berries – blueberries, cranberries, currants, gooseberries and huckleberries.

All berries are acid, so a boiling water bath for the prescribed length of time is the best process for them.

A light to medium syrup is recommended when canning berries: Light syrup = 1 cup of sugar to 1 quart of water. Medium syrup = 1¾ cup sugar to 1 quart of water. The sugar water mixture is heated to dissolve the sugar.

Fruits may be canned in water, juice or syrup. Syrup helps fruit hold its shape, color and flavor.

Strawberries are best preserved by freezing. Canned strawberries fade, float and result in an unappealing product.



## Canning on a Smooth or Ceramic Cooktop

A smooth or ceramic cooktop is easy to clean and looks nice but it may not be right for home canning. For water bath canners or pressure canners to work successfully on a ceramic cooktop, the canner bottom must be flat, in contact with the cooktop and extend no more than 2 inches beyond the design on the cooktop surface. The lighter weight stamped aluminum canners usually have a concave bottom. If the concavity is greater than 1/8 inch, the canner will not perform well.



If a heavy canner is slid or pulled across the surface, the cooktop may scratch and lead to major cracking.

A food safety issue results when many ceramic cooktops have automatic shut-offs or heat-cycling when the heat gets very high. If the burner shuts off during processing, the food may be under-processed.

Many manufacturers do not recommend using a ceramic cooktop for canning. The size and weight of the pan and extended cooking times can damage the cooktop and may void the warranty if the manufacturer advises against it. Check your cooktop manufacturer recommendations.



## Frequently Asked Questions



- *How do I remove white deposits on the outside of jars?* Usually the white deposits are the result of hard water or scale. Soak the jars for several hours in a solution containing 1 cup vinegar and 1 gallon of water. Reduce scale build-up by adding 1/2 cup vinegar to the boiling water bath canner or 2 tablespoons vinegar to the pressure canner before processing.
- *Is it safe to layer 2 rows of jars inside the canner?* Two layers of jars can be processed at one time if your canner is tall enough. Place a small wire rack (e.g. cooling rack) between the layers so that water or steam will circulate around each jar. Another method is to stack the top layer so that one jar is centered on the edges of the two jars below it. Make certain that water covers the tops of all jars by 1 to 2 inches in a boiling water bath canner. The pressure canner should have 2 to 3 inches of water in the bottom.
- *Will food spoil if it stays frozen longer than the recommended storage time?* No. The recommended storage time is the time in which food should be used to insure maximum quality. Food stored longer than the recommended time is safe but flavor, color and texture will continue to deteriorate.