

Guide to Safely Preserving Your Fruits



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Practice Safe Home Canning in Mason Jars

When local foods like apples, strawberries, raspberries, cranberries and *tomatoes (which require the addition of acid) are abundant on PEI, why not safely preserve some for the winter ahead. These fruits are **high acid foods**. Pickles, mincemeat made with fruit only, relishes and pickled beets should be preserved in the same manner. **Low acid foods** such as meats, vegetables and fish require a **pressure canner** as they need to be heated to a much higher temperature.

We will concentrate on preserving **high acid foods** only.

Gone are the days of reusing old cheese whiz and pickle bottles, parawax and wax paper to seal and store your food. Preparing food as Grandma did is not worth the health risk.

Mold, yeasts and fungi cause foods to ferment, making it unsafe to eat. These are easily destroyed at temperatures between 140 and 190 °F (60-88 °C). Heat processing high acid foods in a boiling water canner heats food in mason jars to 212 °F (100 °C) which is more than sufficient to destroy the molds and yeasts without affecting the quality of the food. **This is a very important step in home canning as it exhausts the air from the jars and seals them properly.** You may think because your lid snapped without processing the jar in hot water that it is properly sealed – not so. You are still at risk for food spoilage and possible illness.

You will need:

- A large pot, deep enough to cover the bottles with about an inch of water that can be brought to a full rolling boil. Blue enamel canners or a large pot that you have will do.
- A rack to keep the bottles off the bottom of the pot. (Cake rack or make a rack by tying jar rings together.)
- Tongs to remove hot bottles
- Mason jars, 2 piece - rims and lids. **Always** use **new** lids each time you preserve.
- Sets which include tongs, plastic measure (to measure how full the jars are and to let air out of bottles), magnetic wand (to pick lids from hot water) and a funnel are available at local stores in the \$20.00 price range.

Method:

Wash jars and 2 piece lids. Place jars in canner filled with water, and bring to simmer. Place lids only in a pot of water and bring also to a simmer (82 °C). **Do not boil.** Keep lids in the hot water until ready to use – at least 5 minutes to soften the seal.

Prepare recipe and ladle hot food into mason jar. Remove air bubbles (e.g. use a wooden skewer). Fill to recommended head space (see chart). Clean rim of jar and place lid on jar. Screw on ring until fingertip-tight only. Do not over tighten.

Using your tongs, place the filled jar into the canner in an upright position. Continue to fill all jars in the same manner. Cover the canner, bring to rolling boil and boil for recommended times. Start counting the time from when the full rolling boil begins. (See chart). When time is up, remove canner from burner and carefully remove the cover. When the boiling has stopped, remove the jars from the canner with the tongs without tilting the jars. Place hot jars on a dishtowel and do not disturb for 24 hours. **Do not tighten** rims. The lids should curve down and be sealed and the air exhausted from the jars. Remove rims for storage and store preserve in a cool dark place.

Headspace:

Measure from the top of jar to the food. Mustard pickles, chutney, salsa, mincemeat require ½ inch (12 mm) headspace. Jams, jellies, marmalades, cranberry sauce and soft spreads should be filled to ¼ inch (6 mm) headspace.

Water bath times:

Size of bottle	Food	Time
250 mL (1 cup)	jams, jellies and marmalades	10 minutes
500 mL (1 pint)	jams, jellies and marmalades	15 minutes
250 mL (1 cup)	salsa	15 minutes
500 mL (1 pint)	salsa	20 minutes
500 mL (1 pint)	pickled beets	30 minutes

***Tomatoes:** There are many ways of preserving tomatoes. Because they are at the low end of high acid foods, if they are preserved in a boiling water canner you must add acid to the tomatoes. This can be done by adding lemon juice using the following guideline. 1 Tbsp. (15 mL) for each 1 pint size (500 mL) jar and 2 Tbsp. (30 mL) for each quart (1 litre) size jar.

Recipes

Whole Cranberry Sauce (Makes 4 - 500 mL (pint) jars and 1- 250 mL jar)

8 cups cranberries 2 L

4 cups water 1 L

4 cups sugar 1 L

Combine sugar and water in large saucepan and boil for 5 minutes. Add cranberries. Return to boil and continue cooking until skins burst. Ladle into hot jars to within 1/4 inch of top of jar, remove air bubbles, clean top of jar, place lid on jar, add rim and tighten until fingertip tight and place in canner. Water bath 15 minutes.

Applesauce can be made to your taste and bottled in the same manner. You can make it with apple juice and no sugar and it will keep very well. If you have a food mill, you can make a healthier version leaving the skins on and putting it through the food mill. Bottle while extremely hot.

Salsa:

12 cups	peeled, chopped ripe tomatoes	3L
3 cups	finely chopped celery	750 mL
2 cups	finely chopped onion	500 mL
1/4 cup	pickling salt	60 mL

Let sit for 2-3 hours.

Drain and add:

1	green pepper, finely chopped	
1	red pepper, finely chopped	
1	13 oz. can tomato paste	385 mL
3/4 cup	white sugar	175 mL
1 cup	vinegar	250 mL
1/2 tsp.	mustard seed	2 mL
1/2 tsp	celery seed	2 mL
2 tsp.	chili powder	10 mL
2 tsp.	cumin	10 mL
2 tsp.	garlic powder	10 mL
1 tsp.	chili pepper flakes	5 mL

Bring to a boil and simmer about 15 minutes.

Fill 500 mL jars leaving 1/2 inch (12 mm) headspace

Place jars in canner and bath for 20 minutes.

Mincemeat: (recipe may be doubled)

2 quarts	green tomatoes	2 L
2 cups	brown sugar	500 mL
1/2 lb.	raisins	250 g
1/2 lb.	currants	250 g
1/4 lb.	mixed peel	100 g
1/4 cup	vinegar	60 mL
1/4 cup	butter	60 mL
1/2 tsp.	cinnamon	2 mL
1/2 tsp.	cloves	2 mL
1/2 tsp.	mace	2 mL
1/2 tsp.	nutmeg	2 mL
1/2 tsp.	salt	2 mL

Method:

Chop tomatoes and drain. Cover with cold water and bring to a boil. Scald for 30 minutes and drain. Add sugar, raisins, currants, mixed peel, vinegar and butter. Stir well and boil until thick – at least 2 hours. Add spices half way through cooking. Fill jar, leaving 1/2 inch (12 mm) headspace. Seal and water bath 15 minutes.

Quiz:

1. The way my mother preserved by reusing glass bottles is the safest way – T or F
2. Always fill the jar leaving an inch of head space is the best way. T or F
3. If mold appears on top of your jam, scrape it off and stir the jam and it is OK to consume. T or F
4. Always water bath your jams, jellies and pickles. T or F
5. Make sure the rim is tight before putting your jar in the water canner. T or F
6. You really don't need a rack to keep your bottles off the bottom of the canner. T or F
7. Save your lids and reuse them again and again. T or F
8. You can use the water bath method with your usual jam recipe. T or F
9. If you water bath your fruit it will be overcooked. T or F
10. It is OK if I use the same rims over and over again. T or F
11. Always tighten the rim for storing your jams, etc. T or F

Answers:

1. F - Never use bottles that aren't mason jars for preserving.
2. F - Always refer to the chart as to how much headspace to leave.
3. F - Spores cannot be seen and the jam should be discarded.
4. T -Water bathing your preserves exhausts the air from the jar and kills molds and fungi.
5. F -The rim should be fingertip tight only.
6. F - You always need a rack under the jars to prevent breakage.
7. F - Never reuse your lids for preserving more than once.
8. T - You can water bath your usual successful recipe.
9. F - It does not become overcooked by water bathing.
10. T - You can reuse your rims many times as they can be taken off for storage.
11. F - Never retighten the lid, remove it or leave it as is.