

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Canning High and Low Acid Foods

Foods containing high amounts of acid are popular choices for home canners, due to their relatively easiness to preserve. These foods provide you with the opportunity to prepare and enjoy a wide array of creative recipes, from side dishes to desserts. High acid foods include fruit, fruit juices, jams, jellies, and other fruit spreads, tomatoes (with added acid), pickles, relishes, chutneys, sauces, vinegars and condiments.

Boiling water canning is recommended as a safe method of processing acid foods. Not all bacteria in these canned foods will be killed. However, surviving bacteria can not grow in foods with pH values of 4.6 or lower. An increase in pH of acid foods may be caused by growth of several bacteria and mold species when these foods are under processed. It is important that acid foods be processed in boiling water for the sufficient time period to kill all organisms capable of growing at or below a pH of 4.6.

When selecting fruit to be canned, you want desirable color, flavor, ripeness and uniform size and shape. Trim out minor diseased spots on larger fruits, discard small diseased fruit. Wash fruit carefully, but avoid soaking. Sugar can be added to help fruits hold their shape, color and flavor.

You want disease-free, preferably vine-ripened, firm tomatoes for canning. Do not can tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines. Green tomatoes are more acidic than ripened tomatoes and can be substituted for ripe tomatoes in any canning recipe. Some tomatoes are low in acid. To ensure safe acidity in whole, crushed, or juiced tomatoes, add two tablespoons of bottled lemon juice or ½ teaspoon of citric acid per quart of tomatoes. For pints, use one tablespoon of bottled lemon juice or ¼ teaspoon of citric acid. Sugar to taste may be added to offset the acid taste.

All fresh vegetables except for most tomatoes are low-acid foods. Most mixtures of low-acid and acid foods also are low-acid products unless their recipes include enough lemon juice, citric acid or vinegar to make them acid foods. Other low-acid foods are red meats, seafood, poultry, soups, and milk. Low-acid foods have a pH value of 4.7 or higher, while foods with a pH value of 4.6 or lower are consider acid. Unlike acid foods which require only a boiling water

canner, low-acid foods require a pressure canner. It is not the pressure that destroys the bacteria, but the high temperatures for adequate time period.

The pressure in the canner increases the temperature. Temperatures of 240°F or above are required for low-acid foods in a pressure canner. Dial Gauge indicates pressure inside the canner. Pressure canner gauges (dial type gauges) should be tested annually to be sure they are accurate. Pressure in the canner is increased or decreased by adjusting burner heat. Before using a pressure canner for the first time you need to read and understand the manufacturer's manual.

For further food preservation information or to have your dial type pressure canner gauge tested, contact WVU Pendleton County Extension Agent, Janice Heavner at 304-358-2286.