

Avoid Contamination: Where to go for safe canning recipes

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If I gave you a delicious-looking hamburger, complete with all your favorite condiments, and told you I couldn't guarantee it had been cooked long enough, would you eat it?



I'm guessing you would probably pass and choose not to eat it. Why? Because eating raw meat poses a risk. We know from scientific studies that raw ground hamburger can contain bacteria called *E. coli*, which can make anyone sick and can be life threatening for young children and older adults. Does this mean we shouldn't eat ground hamburger? No, because scientific studies have also shown that if ground meat is cooked until a meat thermometer shows 160 F, then bacteria is killed, providing a safe food product. There is no need to

avoid eating ground hamburger—the real answer to concerns about the safety of cooked meat is following the USDA scientific guidelines

So it is with canning. The process of preparing food and sealing it in jars for a long shelf life is a scientific process. Rigorous and thorough studies in USDA-endorsed laboratories have already determined what is needed to protect your home-bottled goods from going bad and from becoming contaminated. When these scientific processes are not followed accurately, the canned goods pose a risk similar to that of undercooked meat. Canned goods not processed accurately could have a poor quality, could spoil quickly or could contain a toxin that is taste-less, odor-less, and cannot be seen with the naked human eye. This toxin grows from a germ called *Clostridium botulinum*, which causes the potentially deadly illness botulism. Botulism is rare, but scientific studies have proven proper processing procedures, including time and temperature, to kill the germ before it grows to a toxin.

What's the secret to safe home-bottled goods? Follow safe scientific canning guidelines.

What's the Secret to Safe Home bottled goods?



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Be aware that a simple Internet or pinterest search for a canning recipe is **NOT** the safest way to find a recipe to preserve your food. Be sure to only use recipes and procedures that are scientifically studied and USDA approved.

Canning is not cooking—it is a scientific process that must be followed accurately to ensure safety.

Look for canning information at the resources listed.

- The USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning – This is a great place to look first. Print it or download it for free.

- The National Center for Home Food Preservation – Includes a FAQ database and much more.
- Utah State University Extension
- Check other Cooperative Extension sites near you
- The University of Georgia: Book: So Easy to Preserve, Canning fact sheets, and other publications
- The Ball Canning Company: Blue Book of Preserving and the Home Canner's Help Line: 1-800-240-3340

Remember to read canning recipes with caution. Look for a scientific source. If you have questions or concerns, contact your local Extension office.



Melanie Jewkes works part time in Salt Lake County and has worked for USU for 6 years. The best part of her job is learning and relearning some of the things that matter most—loving and caring for marriage and family, living within your means, and growing, cooking and eating delicious, nutritious food. She is married with two adorable children and lives in Taylorsville.

