

What You Cannot Can Safely at Home

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Did you know that the USDA has tested and approved many recipes to preserve foods at home? There are many foods you can bottle safely at home, as long as you follow USDA-endorsed recipes and procedures. Some unique foods include grapefruit and orange sections; cantaloupe pickles; pie fillings such as apple, mincemeat and green tomato; chicken, venison and fish; hot sauce and ketchup; a variety of soups and many more. (For such recipes and procedures, see the USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning.)

Have fun trying out a new (USDA-endorsed safe recipe) recipe in your kitchen this season. But, remember the possibilities are **not** quite endless.

Be aware that there are many foods that cannot be bottle safely at home. Why is that? One reason is that home kitchens are limited. A boiling water canner or a steam pressure canner can only get so hot. Heat is one element that is needed to kill micro-organisms that could spoil your food. A higher temperature needed for low-acid foods (like vegetables, beans and meat) is only achieved at home through a steam pressure canner.

Industrial equipment is much larger and has a different ability to bottle foods than our own kitchens.





Some foods or recipes have not been tested, or have been tested and have NOT been found to be safe. In some instances, the lack of approved canning recipe is due to poor quality. Here is a list of some common foods that are NOT safe to can and NOT safe to consume.

What NOT to can (accessed from: https://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/FN_Food_Preservation_2009-01.pdf)

– **Butter.** That's right, butter. In some emergency preparedness sections of stores, you might see canned butter in a tuna-fish size can. But don't get too excited to go home and melt butter into a jar just to stick it on your food

storage shelves. For now, canning butter using any method is not recommended. Some methods are dangerous, at best; others are not backed up by science. Why can butter when it freezes so easily?

– **Hydrated wheat kernels** (aka wheat berries). Wheat is a low-acid food that is susceptible to botulism if trapped in a low-acid, low-oxygen, room-temperature environment. In addition, the starch in wheat may interfere with the heat penetration during canning. Insufficient processing can result in botulism food poisoning. Instead of canning, store wheat dry until used, or if hydrated, refrigerated up to several days. You may also hydrate a batch and freeze in usable portions.

– **Quick breads** (e.g. banana, zucchini, pumpkin). This idea likely started when people started baking quick breads in canning jars to create a nice round loaf. However, placing a lid and ring on the jar to create a vacuum seal as it cools does not kill botulism-forming organisms that grow in warm, moist, anaerobic conditions. These items should be either baked fresh and served or frozen. For more information see this fact sheet: https://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/FN-FS_250_10.pdf

– **Dried Beans** (pinto, kidney, etc.). To safely can dried beans, they must be hydrated first (usually 12 to 18 hours) and then brought to a boil for 30 min. Hot beans are then placed into hot jars for processing. It is not safe to put dry beans covered with water into a steam pressure canner for processing.

– **Fresh homemade salsa**. There are many delicious salsa recipes to enjoy with your fresh garden produce, but these are not formulated for canning. Remember that canning recipes are scientifically studied to account for enough acid and/or processing time to keep the food safe. Fresh salsas are

not formulated for canning. According to the National Center for Home Food Preservation's Salsa bulletin, "Improperly canned salsas or other tomato-pepper combinations have been implicated in more than one outbreak of botulism poisoning." Keep you and those consuming your salsas safe. Keep fresh salsas fresh, or freeze. Don't experiment with canning your favorite fresh salsa. For tips on canning salsas safely, see: http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/sensational_salsa.pdf

– **Garlic, vegetable or herb-flavored oils.** While these make beautiful gifts, infused oils have the potential to support the growth of *C. botulinum* bacteria, which grows into botulism food poisoning. These are best made fresh for use and not left at room temperature.

– **Pickled eggs.** There are NO home canning directions for pickled eggs. There are some recipes for storage in the refrigerator, but in order to avoid botulism, do not leave at room temperature, except for serving time, and do not attempt to bottle for food storage.



Author bio: 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.

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.



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Food in a Jar Recipes



We have oodles of ideas for using jars for canning, safety while you are canning, salsa recipes for canning and of course Jams & Jellies.

But the jars can be used for more than just canning. Here are a few ideas we found to make use of the jars when they aren't full of your canned goods.

A quick solution is a salad in a jar.



More salad options – some savory and some sweet:



What about converting that jar so it's more usable for a small adult lunch box?

All this talk about lunch options begs the question: What

about breakfast? Have you tried this overnight oatmeal in a jar recipe?



Hope you enjoyed these creative and helpful ways to get some use out of the jars between canning seasons. Do you have a favorite recipe in a jar? Share it with us!