



Pressure Canning Checklist

This checklist is intended for stovetop pressure canners like the Presto 16 quart or 23 quart models, or Barton, Mirro, or T-Fal models. Steps for All American canners will differ slightly. This checklist does not include preparing the food for canning. We encourage the use of tested recipes from reliable sources (USDA and others).

- Prepare the jars, lids, and rings
 - Check rims for nicks and cracks—don't use damaged jars.
 - Wash jars in hot soapy water, rinse, drain, or use dishwasher.
 - Use new lids. Wash lids and rings in hot soapy water, rinse, drain.
 - If recipe requires loading food into hot jars, use dishwasher, a sink of hot water with jars submerged, or a large pot of hot water on the stove with jars submerged. Do not use an oven.
- Prepare the canner
 - Check the gasket placement and be sure the vent is clear of debris.
 - Place rack in the bottom
 - Check instruction book and add the required amount of water—most likely 2-3 inches.
 - Turn the heat on under the canner and bring water to just below a simmer (do this step when you are nearly ready to load the jars).
- Know your altitude/elevation to determine psi (pounds per square inch of pressure) needed for safe pressure canning at your elevation
 - Know how to read the dial on a dial gauge canner, or know which weight to use on a weighted gauge canner
- Double check processing time listed in recipe
- Load food into the jars
 - Fill the jars with food and any liquid called for in the recipe, leaving the recommended amount of head space (distance between the top of the food and the top of the jar). Headspace is generally 1-inch but differs in some recipes. Follow the recipe!
 - Using a non-metallic knife or de-bubbling tool, release any air trapped in the food by dipping the tool into the jar and moving the food around.
 - Re-check headspace and add more liquid or food to compensate for trapped air that was released if necessary.
 - Wipe rims with dampened paper towel to ensure a good seal. Use a vinegar-dampened paper towel if recipe contained meat—vinegar cuts any fat that might be present on the rims.
 - Place the lid (flat) on the jar and secure with a band (ring) by screwing it down finger tight using only your fingers and not your palm or your arm muscles.
- Load jars into the canner
 - Jars must be upright with a minimum of 4 jars per batch. You can fill in with jars of water if necessary.
 - Avoid temperature differential (thermal shock) between the jars of food and the water in the canner to prevent breakage. If jars are cooler as with raw pack recipes, water should be below simmering. If jars are hot, water can be simmering.
 - Place the lid on the canner, but do not place the weight. Vent must be open to allow steam to escape.
- Vent canner for 10 minutes



- Crank the heat up to get the water boiling. It may take 15-20 minutes of heating to produce a constant head of steam spewing out the vent.
- Once the stream of steam is steady, set the timer for 10 minutes.
- Note: If your canner is not completely sealed, this is usually the time when you will become aware of that. You will see steam escaping from under the lid instead of only through the vent. Turn the heat off and wait until it is safe to remove the lid. Adjust the gasket or replace if you have a new one on hand. Start the venting process over again from the beginning.
- Bring canner up to pressure
 - Place the weight on the canner so the steam will be trapped inside.
 - Adjust the heat so the pressure rises gradually to the correct psi.
 - Once the weight starts jiggling (check instruction book for exactly what your jiggle is supposed to do) or the dial reaches the correct pressure, set the timer for the processing time.
 - Find the “sweet spot” for the heat that will hold the pressure as steady as possible for the entire processing time. It is OK if it climbs a pound or two, but it should not go below the prescribed psi. Check often during the process.
- Cool down time
 - When processing time is complete, turn off the heat and don't touch the canner until the pressure is back to zero. For food safety, it is imperative to allow the canner to cool down on its own. Depending on your canner, this cool down time can take up to an hour.
 - To check for zero pressure, tilt the weight to see if steam escapes, or if your canner has an air lock button, check to see if it is in the down position.
 - Wait ten minutes before opening the canner.
- Removing food from the canner
 - Open the canner lid tilted away from your face.
 - Use a jar lifter to remove each jar and place jars on a rack to cool.
 - Allow jars to cool several hours without touching.
- Final steps
 - When jars are completely cool, remove screw bands. Stuck bands can be removed by placing the jars upside down in hot water deep enough to cover the rings for a few minutes.
 - Check for a good seal by tapping the lid for the appropriate sound or looking to see if the lid is concave. A sure way is to carefully lift the jar by only the lid. If it holds, you have a seal. If a jar did not seal, place in the refrigerator and eat within a few days.
 - Wash the jars of food in a sink of soapy water. Set on a rack to dry. Date and label the food.
 - Store in a cool dark place until ready to use.

Final Tips

- To reduce or prevent siphoning, allow for proper headspace in the jars. While jars are in the canner, avoid fast changes in temperature or pressure and wait 10 minutes before opening the canner after the pressure has reached zero.
- Move the jars of food into the canner as soon as possible after filling them and placing the lids.
- Follow the details of your recipe for headspace, temperature of the jars when filling with food, temperature of liquid to be added to the jars. Those details are part of the testing done when you use a tested recipe, so every detail is important.