



Water Bath/Steam Canning Checklist

This checklist does not include preparing the food for canning. We encourage the use of tested recipes from reliable sources (USDA and others). Only high acid foods such as most fruits are safe for water bath or steam canning. Never process low acid foods such as vegetables or meats in a water bath or steam canner.

Overview: Using a Standard Water Bath Canner (Sometimes called a Boiling Water Canner)

A water bath canner is a large vessel with a rack in the bottom and is tall enough to hold quart jars plus an additional inch or two of water above the jars. It has a slightly domed lid that allows steam to condense and drip back down into the pot. Jars of food are completely submerged in water with an inch or two of water above the jars. Here is the process:

- Fill the canner about 2/3 with water and bring to a boil.
- Add the jars and ensuring there is at least an inch or two of water above the jars. Have a kettle of boiling water ready on the side to add to the canner if more water is needed to keep the jars covered.
- Bring the water back up to a rolling boil.
- Start the processing time once the water is boiling again.
- Reduce the heat slightly but maintain a gentle boil for the entire processing time.
- When processing time is up, turn off the heat, remove the lid, and allow the jars to rest in the pot for 5 minutes before removing them.

Overview: Using a Steam Canner

In a steam canner the jars are placed on a rack that holds them above the water level. No part of the jars should be immersed in water. The bottom of the canner holds about 3 quarts of water but check your book of instructions for your canner to be sure. **Never** allow the canner to boil dry. Select tested recipes with processing times less than 45 minutes. Here is the process:

- Bring the water in the canner to a simmer.
- Place the jars of food on the rack and cover the canner with the lid.
- Bring the water to a boil with the heat on high.
- Allow the water to boil vigorously generating steam for about 10 minutes, then start the processing time.
- Turn the heat down but maintain the boil and steam generation throughout the entire processing time.
- When processing time is finished, turn off heat, remove the lid, and allow the jars to rest in place for 5 minutes before removing them.

General Instructions

- Prepare the jars, lids, and rings
 - Check jars, especially rims, for nicks and cracks—don't use damaged jars.
 - Wash jars in hot soapy water, rinse, drain, or use dishwasher. Jars need to be sterilized only if the processing time is under 10 minutes.
 - If sterilization is needed, fill canner with water and jars and boil for 10 minutes. Never boil the lids or bands.
 - Use new lids, check for imperfections, and use only perfect 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
 - Place rack in the bottom of the canner.
 - Fill a water bath canner about 2/3 full of water and bring to a boil. For a steam canner, add the amount of water recommended in your instruction book and bring to a simmer.
- Know your altitude/elevation to determine if extra time is needed for processing.
 - Double check processing time listed in recipe. Most processing times provided in tested recipes are for sea level so those of us living above 1000 feet must add more time according to the following table:

Altitude (elevation) in feet	Increase processing time
1000-3000	5 minutes
3001-6000	10 minutes
6001-8000	15 minutes
8001-10,000	20 minutes
- 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 liquid covering 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 jar 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 jar rims with dampened paper towel to ensure a good seal.
 - 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 in the canner.
 - Avoid temperature differential (thermal shock) between the jars of food and the water in the canner to prevent breakage (i.e. don't place jars of cold food into a hot canner).
 - Place the lid on the canner.
- Bring canner up to boiling
 - Follow the instructions for your canner as outlined in the overview section above.
- Process the batch
 - Throughout the entire processing time, ensure that the boiling water canner stays at a constant boil or that the water in the steam canner continues to boil and produce steam.
 - Once the processing time is over, turn the heat off.
- Remove jars of food from the canner
 - Open the canner lid tilted away from your face.
 - Allow jars to sit in place for 5 minutes.
 - Use a jar lifter to remove each jar and place jars on a rack to cool.
 - Allow jars to cool at room temperature for 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.
- If needed, 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.