



Storing Canning Supplies

With the major canning season ending, many home food preservers are storing canning equipment until spring. Take time now to properly prepare the equipment for storage.

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Martha Zepp, Penn State University

Before packing canning equipment away, make sure all equipment (including canners) is clean. Any grease or food residue provides a host on which bacteria and mold can grow. Avoid soil build-up by cleaning equipment after each use.

Pressure Canner

- Clean the vent pipe.

Draw a clean string, narrow strip of cloth or pipe cleaner through the vent opening.

- Check that the safety valve is free of debris and operates freely. Clean the valve by removing it if possible.
- Use a soft brush to clean the gasket trough.
- If your canner has a dial gauge, avoid getting water in the gauge or the pipe leading up to the gauge.
- The gasket helps seal the edges of the canner and lid to prevent steam from escaping.
 - Clean the gasket after each use.
 - Check that the gasket fits tightly and is flexible--not brittle or cracked. It should maintain an air-tight seal between the canner and the lid.
 - Gaskets should be replaced every three years under normal usage.

- New gaskets can be ordered from the manufacturer or may be found at some hardware stores. You will need to know the model of the pressure canner when ordering a replacement part. The model number is usually on the bottom of the canner, on the handle or on a plate attached to the canner.
- Some canners do not have gaskets and use a metal to metal seal instead. Check that the metal to metal edge is smooth and free of grease.

Dial Gauges

- Dial gauges should be tested yearly for accuracy. Make a note to have the dial gauge tested at your local Penn State Extension office in early spring. This should be done in advance of the canning season so that if the gauge tests off by more than two pounds, it can be replaced before you need to use it.
- It is better to have the gauge tested after storage in case the gauge is bumped or dropped while in storage.
- Weighted gauges do not need tested because they do not go out of calibration.

Removing Mineral Deposits

Use the following steps to remove the darkened surface on the inside of an aluminum canner.

- Fill the canner above the darkened line with a mixture of 1 tablespoon cream of tartar to each quart of water.
- Place the canner on the stove, heat water to a boil, and boil covered until the dark deposits disappear.
- Sometimes stubborn deposits may require the addition of more cream of tartar.
- Empty the canner and wash with hot soapy water, rinse and dry.

Use the following steps to reduce mineral deposits from hard water in canners.

- Add 2 tablespoon of white vinegar to the water in the canner while you process your jars.
- The white mineral deposits that form on canners can also be removed by the cream of tartar method, but it will take much longer to remove these deposits. You may need to repeat the process several times to remove all the mineral deposits.

Storing Canners

- Store a boiling water canner, atmospheric steam canner or a pressure canner with crumpled clean paper towels in the bottom and around the rack. This will help absorb moisture and odors.
- Place the lid upside down on the canner.
- Never seal the lid on the canner for storage.

Jars and Lids

Jars and lids need care in storage too.

- As you empty jars during the winter, check for any chips or breaks, wash and store in a safe place.
- Scale or hard water film can be removed from jars by soaking them for several hours in a mixture of 1 cup of vinegar to 1 gallon of water.
- Storing jars upside down will prevent dust and insects from entering the jars.
- Cover the jars.
- Lids should not be reused because the sealing compound may fail on second usage.
- Screw bands should be removed after the jars have sealed and cooled; do not leave the bands on the jars during storage.
- Wash and dry the screw bands completely and store them in a dry place. Moisture such as a humid basement will cause bands to rust.
- Screw bands can be reused unless they are rusted.

Location

Store all your canning equipment in a clean dry storage area. Avoid excess humidity which can cause rust and mold. Using clear storage boxes will provide some additional protection.