



## Follow Good Food Safety Practices When Preserving Food - Banish Bacteria

Important practices for controlling bacteria in the kitchen also apply to food preservation.

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Cleanliness and temperature control are essential for food safety.

### Clean

Keep hands, counters, equipment and food clean. Wash your hands often before and during the process of canning. You touch many things while canning—raw food, your hair, pets, dirty counters and used utensils, raw meat and other foods

being prepared for family meals—wash your hands each time you touch one of these potential carriers of bacteria.

Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, jars, and counter tops with hot soapy water before and after preparing each food item. Use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards that can be washed in the dishwasher or hot soapy water after use. Wipe counters with a bleach solution made of one-tablespoon liquid chlorine bleach in one gallon of warm water. If you have any cuts on your hands, wear plastic gloves.

## Separate

Do not cross-contaminate. That's a scientific word for how bacteria can be spread from one food product to another. Use a clean cutting board and utensils to slice or cut foods. Avoid using the same cutting board or knife to slice vegetables as you use to cut meat. Clean knives after each use. Use clean spoons to stir product. Don't use the spoon that you used to stir the product to stir the almost finished food. Use paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces and to wipe the edges of jars before applying lids—those fabric dishcloths and sponges hold bacteria that can be transferred from one place to another. Use a clean bowl or pot to hold peeled food. Never place clean food or cooked food on or in a container that previously held unwashed food.

## Control Temperature

Bacteria grow best between 40°F and 140°F, the temperature danger zone. Keep perishable produce refrigerated until you are ready to can. Once you start the canning process, continue until finished. Work with one canner load at a time so that peeled food is not in the danger zone for more than two hours. A large volume of food cools slowly, meaning that it is in the danger zone long enough to spoil. Allowing tomato juice or vegetable soup to sit in a five-gallon container at room temperature overnight is inviting disaster. Even a one gallon container that is refrigerated can spoil quickly. Do not partially prepare food ahead of time to can or freeze later.

## Chill

If you do have a large portion of an ingredient that must be refrigerated, chill the food in an ice water bath stirring until the temperature drops below 70°F and then divide into smaller containers, not over three inches deep. Refrigerate these smaller containers below 40°F until ready to use. Use a thermometer to check the temperature. Never cluster large jars or other containers in a refrigerator, not even in a walk-in refrigerator. Allow air space between containers in the refrigerator for the food to cool. A normal size home refrigerator is limited in the amount of food it can safely cool at one time.

Use the **correct canning method** based on the food you are preserving. Pressure canning for low acid foods and water bath canning for high acid foods. Follow research tested recipes for safe processing times and temperatures. Following these guidelines will result in a safe and delicious product.