

## Sterilizing Canning Jars

### IT'S NOT ALWAYS NECESSARY! KNOW WHEN AND WHY

When canning, sterilizing jars is essential only when processing times are less than 10 minutes. For processing times of 10 minutes or more, pre-sterilization is not required – the jars become sterilized during processing.

Can you pre-sterilize jars anyway? Well sure, it doesn't hurt anything but you'd really just be expending extra time and energy unnecessarily.

What about increasing processing times to avoid the sterilization step? Yes, that is also acceptable, but not always preferable. For example, some jams and jellies have only 5-minute processing times; if they are made from fruit low in pectin, the gel could be weakened by increasing the processing time.

***To recap: Pre-sterilize canning jars only when the processing time is less than 10 minutes.***

(And remember, if you live above sea level, make altitude adjustments to the sterilization and/or processing times as necessary.)

For the step-by-step procedures for sterilizing jars, see our companion bulletin, *How to Sterilize Canning Jars*.

For further information, visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP) website at [www.nchfp.uga.edu](http://www.nchfp.uga.edu) or your local Cooperative Extension Office.

Brought to you by the UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County  
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Helpline (530) 621-5506 • Email: [edmfp@ucanr.edu](mailto:edmfp@ucanr.edu)  
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