simcoe muskoka
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

GUIDE TO

Home Canning and Shelf-Stable Foods

IN SIMCOE MUSKOKA



Home canning is a popular way to save fresh, local food in jars to enjoy it later. However, canned food can make people very sick if it is not prepared safely.

Ontario's food safety rules help ensure canned food is safe to eat. Public health inspectors inspect food businesses to help prevent foodborne illness.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO BEFORE I START?

If you want to make canned foods to sell in a home or commercial kitchen, you must notify the health unit first. A public health inspector must check the kitchen and review your food safety plan before you make and sell food to the public.

Home canning is not recommended in child-care centres or long-term care homes because people in these settings are at higher risk of illness.

Always use a tested recipe from a trusted source, such as the National Center for Home Food Preservation, Ball or Bernardin. A tested recipe tells you the right time, temperature and acid level needed to make food safe. Follow the recipe exactly. Do not change the ingredients, amounts, cooking time, sugar, salt or vinegar unless the recipe says it is safe to do so.

If you use your own recipe, a health inspector must review it first. The recipe may also need to be tested for safety by a lab. If you change the recipe, it may need to be tested again and reviewed by the health unit.

HOME CANNING METHODS

Botulism is a very serious form of food poisoning that can be deadly. The bacteria can grow in canned foods that are not made safely.

There are two main types of home canning: high-acid foods and low-acid foods. Each type needs a different canning method to help stop dangerous bacteria from growing.

HIGH-ACID FOODS

High-acid foods have a pH below 4.6 and are lower risk. Examples include many jams, jellies and vinegar pickles. A boiling-water canner can be used for many high-acid foods. A validated recipe will tell you the steps to follow and how long to heat the jars.

LOW-ACID FOODS

Low-acid foods have a pH above 4.6 and are higher risk. Examples include vegetables, meat, soups, salsa, antipasto and chili sauce. If you prepare low-acid canned foods, you need a written food safety plan reviewed by your public health inspector.

NOT PERMITTED

- Electric pressure cookers, Instant Pots and multi-cookers for pressure canning are not permitted.
- Do not use a dishwasher for sterilizing jars.
- Do not use an oven for canning or sterilizing jars, as dry heat can cause jars to crack.

RESOURCES

Bernardin
Bernardin Home Canning: Because You Can: Recipes

Ball
www.ballmasonjars.com/recipes?fdid=recipes

National Center for Home Food Preservation (University of Georgia)
nchfp.uga.edu/how/can/canning-fruits-and-fruit-products/fruit-purees