

Delicious Soups and Stews with Home-Canned Meat



What could be more inviting than a warm bowl of beef or venison stew on a cold winter day? Or maybe your family prefers mouth-watering chicken pot pie? These comforting dishes are easily prepared from home-canned meat, wild game or poultry.

Canning low-acid foods like meat, wild game, fish, and poultry requires special care. Low-acid foods can support the production of the deadly botulism toxin if these foods are not properly processed in a pressure canner. A pressure canner heats food to high temperatures, 240° to 250°F or higher, and destroys the spores that produce botulism toxin. A boiling water canner, such as might be used for canning pickles or fruit, heats food only to 212°F, not high enough to ensure safety while maintaining quality.

SIDE BAR:

A pressure canner is not the same thing as a pressure cooker. Pressure cookers are used to rapidly cook meats, vegetables and other foods for a family meal. They may not maintain adequate pressure for use in the home-canning process and they heat and cool too quickly, resulting in an inadequate heat process. For home canning, use pressure canners that can maintain pressures up to 15 psi.

Pressure canners may have dial gauges or weighted gauges. Pressure canners should be checked every year to ensure that they are in proper working condition. Check vent ports and gaskets. If you have a dial gauge canner, make sure you have the gauge checked every year. Outagamie County UW-Extension office offers this service, or contact the manufacturer for your canner. You will be putting your family at risk if you can foods with a dial gauge that isn't working properly.

Canning meats. For high quality canned meat, wild game, poultry and fish, start with high quality ingredients. It is important to know that the meat, wild game, poultry and fish have been handled under sanitary conditions throughout processing. Careless handling can lead to spoilage through contamination with food poisoning bacteria such as Salmonella, Listeria and Escherichia coli O157:H7 (E. coli).

Trim meat of fat, bruises and heavy gristle. Remove skin from poultry and bones from red meat and larger bones from poultry. Hot packing is recommended for most meats as it consistently yields a safe, high quality product. Never thicken meat products with flour, or add fat or large quantities of spices not called for in the recipe. For a thickened stew, simply thicken broth with flour and butter before serving.

A special note of caution: Any wild game animal or bird must be handled carefully in the field to prevent spoilage or contamination. For directions for handling wild game, see Canning Meat, Wild Game, Poultry and Fish Safely (B3345), a UW-Extension publication.

Large fish and fish taken from some waters may contain mercury or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at levels which pose a health concern, especially for children and pregnant or breast-feeding women. Check local fish advisories to help you plan what fish to keep as well as how often and how much fish to eat.

Successful processing in a pressure canner requires attention to several details:

-- Vent pressure canners for 10 minutes at the start of processing. Venting drives air from the canner. If air remains trapped in the canner, the canner will not reach pressure, or pressurization will take a long time. A poor quality, unsafe product will result.

-- Adjust for elevation. When pressure canning meats and vegetables, it is important to adjust processing pressure for elevation. Unless otherwise specified, operate:

- *Dial gauge canners* at 11 pounds pressure (11 psi)
- *Weighted gauge canners* at 10 psi at elevations up to 1,000 feet above sea level, or 15 psi above 1,000 feet.

-- Keep an eye on pressure. Start counting processing time when the correct pressure is reached, and regulate heat to maintain a steady pressure. Fluctuating pressures can cause jars to lose liquid and damage seals or lead to under-processing and unsafe food. If at any time the pressure drops below the process level, bring the pressure back up and retime the entire process.

-- Allow time for pressure drop. Let the pressure drop on its own. Do not force-cool the canner.

-- Reprocess within 24 hours, if necessary. If jars fail to seal properly, meats and vegetables can be reprocessed within 24 hours. Repack clean, hot jars with food, top with pretreated lids and process again at the time and pressure specified. Or, refrigerate the jars and use within two or three days; or freeze the jars for later use.

For more information, see UW-Extension publications, *Canning Vegetables Safely* (B1159) and *Canning Meat, Wild Game, Poultry and Fish Safely* (B3345), which are part of The Wisconsin Safe Food Preservation Series by Barbara Ingham. The series also includes: *Canning Fruits Safely* (B0430), *Freezing Fruits and Vegetables* (B3278), *Homemade Pickles and Relishes* (B2267), *Making Jams, Jellies and Fruit Preserves* (B2909), *Tomatoes Tart and Tasty* (B2605), *Canning Salsa Safely* (B3570). The publications are available at the Outagamie County UW-Extension office or from Cooperative Extension Publications (877-947-7827) and online at <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu>. There is a fee for the publications; some are printable online free of charge.

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Recipes for Canning Meats

Vegetable-beef or venison stew

4 cups lean beef or venison, cut in 1-inch cubes
4 cups potatoes, peeled and cut in 1-inch chunks
4 cups carrots, peeled and cut in 1/2-inch slices
4 cups small whole o or quartered medium onions, peeled
2 cups celery, cut in 1-inch pieces
4 to 8 cups meat broth or tomato juice (for venison), as needed
1/2 tsp. Salt per pint (optional, for flavor)

Hot pack: Prepare broth and cook meat, wild game or poultry to 150 degrees F. Combine with prepared vegetables. Pack hot meat and vegetables loosely into clean, hot jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. Add salt, if desired. Cover with boiling broth, leaving 1-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims clean and adjust lids.

Process in a pressure canner at recommended pressure^{**}: Pints: 75 minutes, Quarts: 90 minutes. Yield: 8 pints

Note: Do not thicken broth before canning. Add cornstarch or flour to thicken just before serving.

Chicken-vegetable mix

8 to 10 lbs. chicken, game bird or rabbit, cut in pieces
1 tbsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
1 tbsp. parsley, chopped
Water, to cover
1 cup onion, peeled and chopped
2 cups celery, chopped
2 cups carrots, peeled and sliced thinly

Place chicken, salt, pepper and parsley in a large kettle. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Simmer until chicken can be removed from the bones. Remove and discard skin, bones and fat. Save broth. Add onion, celery and carrots to broth and bring to a boil. Stir in chicken pieces.

Hot pack: Fill clean, hot jars with hot chicken-vegetable mixture, leaving 1-inch headspace. Cover with boiling broth, leaving 1-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims clean and adjust lids.

Process in a pressure canner at recommended pressure^{**}: Pints: 75 minutes, Quarts: 90 minutes. Yield: 7 to 8 pints

Note: This mix can be used for chicken and dumpling stew, hearty soups, or for a delicious chicken pot pie. Add cornstarch or flour to thicken just before servicing. Do not thicken for canning. For chicken pot pie, pour 1-quart into an oven-proof pie dish. Top with a homemade or purchased pie crust, and bake in a preheated oven at 450 degrees F for 10 minutes; then reduce temperature to 350 and continue baking until crust is nicely browned and the filling is hot.

****Canner pressure:**

Dial gauge, up to 2,000 ft. -- 11 pounds pressure

Weighted gauge, up to 1,000 ft. -- 10 pounds pressure

Weighted gauge, above 1,000 ft. --15 pounds pressure

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