

Preserve It Safely

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Clostridium botulinum spores are on most fresh food surfaces. Because they grow only in the absence of air, they are harmless on fresh foods. These spores multiply rapidly and may produce a deadly toxin within 3-4 days in an environment consisting of less than:

- 2% oxygen
- A moist low-acid food
- A temperature 40-120 degrees F.

Proper canning of low-acid foods kills *clostridium botulinum* which may cause Botulism, a deadly form of food poisoning. Botulism is killed at 240 degrees F. Since water boils at 212 degrees F., pressure must be used to increase the temperature to the proper level.

Whether food should be processed in a boiling water canner or a pressure canner is determined by the acidity of the food. Acidity may be natural as in most fruits or added as in pickled foods. Low acid foods are not acidic enough to kill or prevent the growth of botulinum bacteria.

Foods that can be processed by water bath method:

- Jams
- Jellies
- Preserves
- Fruits
- Tomatoes (ONLY if lemon juice or citric acid is added)
- Pickles
- High-acid foods

Foods that must be processed in pressure canners:

- Low acid foods
- Meats
- Poultry
- Seafood
- Milk
- Soups
- All fresh vegetables (except some tomatoes)

Home canning of products can be fun, economical and healthy for the family. Proper procedures are absolutely necessary to provide good quality and safe products. In order to ensure proper methods of home canning, be sure to follow USDA guidelines and procedures. Contact your local County Extension Office or USDA at www.usda.gov.

