

Introduction to canning: Try Peaches, Pears, and Applesauce

Nothing's like homemade fruits you canned

A few good days of preserving food in jars makes for many days of better food to eat throughout the year, allowing even more convenience than we realize. It isn't as hard to do, as we make it out to be, either. Here's an introduction to canning:

A little preparation goes a long ways. The excuse for not loading up our pantries with the food we need has been one of convenience. We lead busy lives sure, but the reality is not that we don't have time for canning, but that we don't know how. Learning how and then devoting a chunk of time to it will be well worth the many times you will access its wares later.

Canning vs Store bought canned fruit

On a daily basis we really don't have time to make food. Many of us don't even make a nice meal anymore. When we stock up on groceries, we don't want to buy perishable items. We rely on processed foods (with lots of msg, for example, to preserve things), if we need an item with a good shelf life at all. And we cook out of a box or eat out more often than we want to admit. If this is the case for you, then canning may provide better options than you would subscribe to on a regular basis in your normal eating habits.

Don't feel bad if this applies to you, because being the bachelor that I am, this is exactly how it can work out for me at times. Like me, you probably know how to cook or you wouldn't have looked at this article before worrying about cooking, but the grocery store has made the quick meal so convenient that you got away from making real food. Though our parents may, or may not have, taught us the trade of cooking, most of our parents have not passed on our grandparent's trade of canning. But a hard day's work of canning makes for easy trips to the pantry—a lot easier than several trips to the grocery store for inferior canned fruit in the long run. Here's where it gets interesting:

Canning fruit together bridges generations

When my parents became "empty nesters," they realized that their children's families could gain from learning canning. It was something of real value: knowledge that they could give to us, bring the families together in working together, and of course include the grandkids on something where everyone was involved. Of course, canning proved to be hard work, and the ideals of the situation were sometimes overshadowed in those few days, but the goodness of that canned fruit does not go unnoticed as a gift that keeps on giving throughout the year. Here's some basics I picked up to help other beginners to get started:

What you will need:

The first matter of importance is obtaining the proper equipment. Sorry I don't know the technical terms: 1) get a nice sized cauldron and a huge pot for the stove (pressurized cookers); 2) buy a gas heating cooker/stove; 3) buy a dipper tray tool that holds the jars; 4) buy an apple sauce squisher and probably an apple corer/slicer; 5) be sure to have several hot pads and towels

handy; 6) then buy yourself several 10-ounce (preferably wide mouth) jars. It's really not too much to consider, but you will need these things to begin canning. The basic premise here is that like making anything else, you will need the proper tools. Don't skimp!

What you need to do:

For peaches, pears, or apples, you should slice them in eighths.

For apples, set the slices in a covered pot on the stove to boil. When the apples are mushy, drain the water, then scoop slices into the applesauce squisher and run them through. Discard the peels, but place the applesauce into jars. Add sugar and cinnamon.

For peaches and pears, boil them, remove peels, and cut up, then scoop the slices into jars. Add sugar water.

Now screw the caps tight onto the containers. To pressure seal your jars for long-term preservation, input jars into dipper tray tool into the pressure cooker cauldron, and heat at a high boiling temperature for about 20 minutes. Remove carefully with a hot pad and place jars on towels on the counter too cool.

This is just a basic article to wet your appetite and introduce you to how easy it can be. If you aren't canning with someone who has canned before, you will want to follow more prescribed instructions. I found a more in-depth link to preserving peaches in jars on e-how.com, for instance.