

Canning & Bottling

Preserve produce in sealed jars for long shelf-stable storage

DIFFICULTY Moderate
TYPE Seasonal batch technique
TIME 2–4 hours per batch



DIFFICULTY
Moderate



TIME
2–4 hrs/batch



COST
Moderate
(equipment, then low)



BEST SEASON
At harvest peaks



FREQUENCY
Several batches per season

01 Heat-processed and sealed

Canning works by heating filled, sealed jars enough to destroy spoilage organisms and create a vacuum seal as they cool — done correctly, this makes produce genuinely shelf-stable for a year or more.



02 What you'll need

- Mason-style jars with new lids
- A water bath canner (for high-acid foods) or pressure canner (for low-acid foods)
- A jar lifter and canning funnel
- A tested, reliable recipe/process for the specific food

03 Method

1. Use a tested recipe appropriate to the food's acidity — this determines whether water bath or pressure canning is required.
2. Sterilise jars and prepare produce according to the recipe.
3. Fill jars, leaving the correct headspace, and remove air bubbles.
4. Wipe rims clean, apply lids, and process in the canner for the specified time.
5. Cool, check seals (lids should not flex), and label with the date before storing.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Jars don't seal** — check for nicks on the jar rim, insufficient processing time, or old lids; reprocess or refrigerate and use promptly instead.
- **Cloudy liquid or floating produce** — often cosmetic rather than unsafe, but check the seal and smell before use.
- **Low-acid foods processed in a water bath** — a genuine safety risk; low-acid foods (most vegetables, meat) require pressure canning, not water bath.
- **Mould or off smell on opening** — discard without tasting; when in doubt, throw it out.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	At the peak of each crop's harvest, when there's a genuine surplus to preserve.
DURATION	Each batch takes a few hours; properly sealed jars keep 12+ months in a cool, dark cupboard.
MAINTENANCE	Check stored jars periodically for seal failure or spoilage signs.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	A firm, sealed lid that doesn't flex when pressed, and clear (not cloudy or bubbling) contents.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Fermenting

Freezing Produce

COMMON MISTAKES

Water bath canning low-acid foods that actually require pressure canning

Reusing old lids that no longer seal reliably

PRO TIP

Always follow a tested, reputable recipe for canning specifically — home food safety isn't the place to improvise ratios or processing times.