



Canning Meat for the Homestead

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Canning is a valuable skill for homesteaders who want to have a supply of food that doesn't require refrigeration. Another advantage of canned meat is that it's already cooked, so whether you want a quick meal, or the power is out making cooking impossible, canned meat is a time and energy saver. Canned meat is very tender, so it's perfect for game meats that can be tough. Many homesteaders hunt for deer, raise their own beef, or purchase a side of beef to cut costs. The most common food preservation method for meat is freezing, but canned meat will save freezer space for other foods. Once foods are canned, no energy is required to store it, and canned foods remain safe indefinitely, as long as proper canning methods were used and the jar remains sealed.

Pressure Canning

All meats need to be pressure canned, meat canned in a boiling water bath may develop the deadly botulism toxin. This toxin can't be seen or tasted, so the only way to safely eat canned meat is to make sure it's pressure canned. If you're new to canning, read *How Do I Can?* at the National Center for Home Food Preservation, www.homefoodpreservation.net, or contact your local Cooperative Extension office. If you use a dial gauge pressure canner, make sure the gauge is accurate by having it tested. Cornell Cooperative Extension in Saratoga County and other Extension offices in N.Y. provide this service at little or no charge.

What You'll Need

Of course, you'll need a pressure canner, either a dial gauge or weighted gauge canner and pint or quart-sized canning jars, a cutting board and knife, plus meat, salt which is optional, and a skillet, if you choose to can with the hot pack method.

Hot Pack vs Raw Pack

Meat may be canned using two methods, the hot pack method or the raw pack method. The hot pack method is preferred and involves browning the meat before packing into canning jars. The browning adds flavor, and shrinks the meat, so more fits in a jar. With hot pack a liquid is added to cover the meat resulting in improved quality, plus flavor can be enhanced by using broth, meat drippings, or tomato juice, especially with wild game. The raw pack method skips the browning step; raw meat is put in jars without the addition of a liquid. For specific direction on canning meat use this link to the National Center for Home Food Preservation, [How Do I Can Meats?](#) You'll find directions there also for canning poultry and seafood, plus meat broth, meat & vegetable soup, and chili con carne.

A Complete Meal from the Homestead

Having your own canned meat makes it easy to have a complete meal from your homestead, assuming you have some canned, frozen or fresh vegetables, including potatoes. There's nothing more rewarding than being self-sufficient with food, and that's more possible when you can meat.

Resource: National Center for Home Food Preservation, www.homefoodpreservation.net, 9-20-2021.