

Resources

More information on home canning tips and safe, standardized recipes can be found at:

National Center for Home Food Preservation

<http://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html>

USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning (2009). Book available for purchase online.

University of Georgia's So Easy to Preserve Book.

<http://setp.uga.edu>

Ball Canning Recipes

<http://www.freshpreserving.com/recipes.aspx>



Center for Health & Hygiene in the Home & Community

The Center for Health and Hygiene in the Home and Community serves as a national and international resource for information and education, applied research, professional training and conferences. The Center focuses on issues relating to hygiene and infection control in areas such as:

- consumer food safety
- home hygiene
- daycare
- preschool
- homecare
- sports and leisure activity
- travel and hospitality

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Center for Health & Hygiene in the Home & Community

Gift Safety Tips for
Homemade Foods.



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Homemade gifts are a thoughtful and creative idea. There is an increasing trend of home-made gift giving in the form of canned goods. However, homemade gifts, especially home-made canned foods can carry a risk of food borne illness if not properly prepared. Here are some tips for giving and receiving homemade canned gifts



Recipes

Always use tested or scientifically evaluated recipes. These recipes are tested to ensure the proper ingredients, times, temperatures and acidity to prevent growth of molds and bacterium and to ensure the product will be safe to eat. Some credible sources include:

- [USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning](#)
- [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) website

DO NOT try to make up your own recipe or use unreliable website recipes. This increases the risk of botulism and spoilage which can cause illness for your gift recipients.

Jars

Use jars that have been tested and approved safe for jarring and canning. Most decorative jars are not tested, may not provide a proper seal and will allow for spoilage and risk of molds or bacteria growth. Use the resources listed above for more information on acceptable jars and where to find them .



Foods

- Jams, jellies, whole fruits such as peaches, plums, and cherries have a higher acid level and high sugar level. This generally makes them low risk for botulism. The high sugar level also make them less likely to develop spoilage. Other safe ideas include cranberry sauce, apple butter, fruit chutneys and relishes, or pickled foods.
- Low acid foods , such as vegetables, are at higher risk for botulism. For canning beginners, it might be best to avoid low acid foods for gifts,
- Other foods NOT recommend for canning include herbs or vegetables in oils, pesto sauces, pumpkin, chocolate sauces, thickened soups or cream sauces. These foods do not have standardized, tested recipes and have higher risk for spoilage and botulism.

Labeling

You should always label your canned or jarred foods for the gift recipient. Label your gift with the contents and the date in which it was prepared. This will best help them properly store and use their canned gifts.



Test the seal

When giving or even receiving a canned gift, it is important to test the seal. Some characteristics of a proper seal are:

- If you press your finger to the middle of the lid, it should NOT spring up when you release your finger
- If you look at the top of the can at eye level, it should be concave (curved down slightly in the center).
- If you tap the lid with the bottom of a spoon, the noise should be a ringing, high pitched sound. If it is a dull sound, the can does not have a proper seal.

Storage

Canned foods are best stored in a clean, cool, dark, dry place. The best temperature to store canned foods is between 50°F and 70°F. Canned foods should be stored properly and eaten within a year.

Botulism

Botulism is a rare, serious foodborne illness that occurs when a person ingests the toxin from the bacterium called *Clostridium botulinum*. The spores of this bacteria can survive in low acid, improperly canned foods and then the bacteria can produce a toxin in the oxygen free environment in a can. Symptoms of botulism can begin within 6 hours to 10 days (typically within 8 to 36 hours). Symptoms include

- Abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting,
- Difficulty swallowing or speaking
- Double vision
- Dry mouth
- Breathing difficulty (which could lead to respiratory failure)
- Weakness with paralysis on both sides of the body

While botulism is rare, it can be deadly. Seek medical attention immediately if you experience any of these side effects after eating canned foods.

For the gift recipient

If you receive a canned gift with a improperly sealed lid, if the lid is swollen, if there is discolored food, it has a bad odor, or if there is visible mold, throw it away. You can also ask the gift giver what type of recipe they used (to check if it is from a credible source). If you have any doubts about the quality of your canned foods, the seal, the smell/ or appearance of the contents, it is safest to immediately throw it in the trash in a sealed plastic bag