

or a pressure canner, will depend on what kinds of foods you want to can.

The boiling water canner, according to Lavonne, is for processing high acid foods like tomatoes, pickles and fruits. The size of your canner must be deep enough to allow an inch of briskly boiling water over your jars during the food processing time. A ridged or flat bottom canner can be used on a gas burner while a flat bottom canner must be used on an electric range. Your water canner must include a rack at the bottom to allow water to move under the jars during processing. Prices vary from \$30-\$50.

The pressure canner is more expensive, ranging from \$70-\$250 depending on size. The pressure canner is used for low acid foods like vegetables or meats. A pressure cooker cannot be substituted for a pressure canner. A pressure cooker is intended for general cooking only.

Jars and Lids

Next on your shopping list is canning jars and lids. You will want to look for standard regular or wide-mouth Mason-type, threaded home-canning jars and two-piece lids. There are several sizes of jars available, ranging from four-ounces up to half gallon in size. You can re-use the jars several times, though you will need to use new lids with each use. Other jars, such as mayonnaise and pickle jars can be used; however their glass is thinner and they have a high risk of breakage. These types of jars should only be used in boiling water canners.

Other Tools

Other tools that you may find useful are: a jar lifter for lifting the hot jars out of the water canner, a funnel for pouring hot food into the jars and a bubbler/measuring tool to release bubbles and measure head space in each jar. Though cost of these items is minimal, they are a great benefit during the canning process.

Processing Precautions

Though processing time and procedure for each type of food varies, there are a few items that are consistent with each process. Wash your fruits and vegetables before canning. Wash and sterilize the jars before each use and check the jars for any cracks or nicks before using. Buy only the number of lids that you will be using that year and do not reuse lids that are bent, old, dented or deformed. Don't leave your boiling water canner or pressure canner unattended during processing and do not retighten lids after processing the jars.

Resources

I spoke to a few fellow canning enthusiasts and they enjoy canning a variety of foods: pickles, whole tomatoes, tomato juice, spaghetti sauce, potatoes, green beans, pumpkin, salsa, jelly, jam, applesauce, apples, grapes and pears. One said her mother used to can chunks of beef roast and recently tried canning dandelion jelly. These enthusiasts have a range of 7-25 years canning experience among them and most of them carry on the canning tradition from their mothers. Many commented on how much they enjoy having a healthy variety of delicious canned goods on their shelves, especially during the cold winter months. Pickles seemed to be a top favorite on several "must have" lists. I agree, almost nothing beats a homemade pickle; except a jar of home-canned peaches!

There are several resources available for recipes and steps on each food you would like to can. Usually, when you purchase a canner, you will receive an instructional booklet that gives you some pro-

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