



Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe

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Pickled Asparagus

Ingredients for 6 wide-mouth pint jars

- 10 pounds asparagus
- 6 large garlic cloves
- 4 ½ cups water
- 4 ½ cups white distilled vinegar (5%)
- 6 small hot peppers (optional)
- ½ cup canning salt
- 3 teaspoons dill seed

Gently wash asparagus under running water. Cut stems from the bottom to leave spears with tips that fit into the canning jar, leaving half of an inch of headspace. Peel and wash garlic cloves. Place a garlic clove in each hot jar. Pack asparagus tightly into the jars with the blunt ends down.

In an 8-quart saucepan, combine water, vinegar, hot peppers, salt and dill seed. Bring to a boil. Place one hot pepper (if used) in each jar over asparagus spears. Pour boiling hot pickling brine over spears, leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a clean dampened cloth. Adjust lids. Process in a boiling water bath; 10 minutes at 0-1,000 feet of altitude, 15 minutes if over 1,000 feet of altitude.



Source:

http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_06/pickled_asparagus.html

Asparagus, the Versatile Vegetable

Fresh asparagus is always a welcome sight in early spring. After a long winter, it is usually our first opportunity for a fresh vegetable straight from the garden. If you have more than you are able to eat, there are a variety of ways to preserve it.

If you are purchasing fresh asparagus look for firm, crisp



stalks with compact brightly colored closed tips. The best way to store fresh asparagus is in the refrigerator upright in a drinking glass or jar filled with about an inch of water. Place a plastic bag loosely around the top. It should last three to four days stored in this way.

If you want to freeze your asparagus, wash the spears and sort them according to size. Trim the stalks. Blanch small spears for two minutes, medium spears for three minutes and large spears for four minutes. Remove from boiling water and dip immediately into ice water for two minutes. Promptly drain, place into containers, seal and freeze. It should maintain good quality for up to nine months in the freezer.

Asparagus can be preserved by pressure canning. It can be hot or raw packed. To hot pack, boil the washed 1-inch pieces for 2-3 minutes. Pack asparagus and hot cooking liquid or boiling water into hot jars leaving 1-inch of headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe the jar rims. Then place and adjust lids. If altitude is 1,000 feet or less, process at 11 pounds of pressure on a dial gauge or 10 pounds with a weighted gauge. Pints should be processed for 30 minutes; quarts for 40 minutes. For detailed information on pressure canning see our guide sheet at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/GH1454> or www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/MF1181.pdf



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Get Your Canning Equipment Ready NOW!

You made it through another canning season, and when the last jar was filled you may have been glad to stash all equipment away quickly in order to be done....so why not take a little time right now to check all canning equipment and be prepared for this year's food preservation season?

First inventory all canning equipment. Do you need more of a certain size of jar? Check current jars for nicks, cracks or rough edges along the lip and throughout the jar. Store empty clean jars in boxes or totes with thin cardboard between layers to protect jars from breakage. Next inventory flats, make note of what you'll need for this season. Carefully check screw bands for rust, recycle those that are unusable.

Next, check canners – are the bottoms flat and free from warping? Are the safety valves still flexible on the pressure canner lid? Are air vents clear of food particles? Is the pressure dial gauge been checked for accuracy? Are the canner handles tight and secure?

Make sure the canners are clean. The darkened surface on the inside of an aluminum canner can be cleaned by filling it above the darkened line with a mixture of 1 tablespoon cream of tartar to each quart of water. Place the canner on the stove, heat water to a boil, and boil covered until the dark deposits disappear. Sometimes stubborn deposits may require the addition of more cream of tartar. Empty the canner and wash it with hot soapy water, rinse and dry. Store with crumpled newspapers inside to absorb moisture and odors. Place the lid upside down on the canner. Do not store a pressure canner with the lid clamped and sealed onto the canner. Does the pressure canner rubber seal (gasket) feel flexible and still fits tightly in the lid groove?

Make sure small equipment, such as a jar lifter, headspace tool, flat magnetic wand, bubble freer and funnel are in good condition and functional. This is also a great time to think about updating canning publications -- there will be a new edition of the "Ball Blue Book" released soon, as well as the ultimate food preservation guidebook "So Easy to Preserve" has been updated for this season. You can always check with your local Extension center for the latest canning guidelines. Happy canning!

Do I need to test my pressure gauge?

If you have a dial gauge pressure canner, the answer is YES! If you have a metal weighted gauge pressure canner that does not require testing. However, a dial gauge must be tested for accuracy before each canning season. Contact your local Extension office to get your gauge tested: in Missouri, go to <http://extension.missouri.edu> or in Kansas: www.ksre.ksu.edu/Map.aspx to find your local office. Most Extension offices can test the following brands of pressure canners: Presto, National, Magic Seal, Maid of Honor, Kwik-Kook and Cook Rite.

When canning low-acid vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, it is essential to use a pressure canner to get the product to high enough temperature to kill any Clostridium botulism spores that may be present. If your pressure gauge is registering one pound high, that will result in a 10% reduction in heating and if the gauge is two pounds high, you will have a 30% reduction in heating. This could be the difference between safe food and potentially deadly food. If your gauge is reading too low, you could be over-processing your food, resulting in a lower quality product. So for the safety of everyone consuming your pressure-canned foods, please check your dial gauge every year!



Reference: *The University of Georgia*

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