

Pressure Canners: Not the Same as Pressure Cookers



Pressure canners are not the same thing as pressure cookers, and it is important to understand the difference.

Pressure cookers or pressure saucepans are used to rapidly cook meats, vegetables and other foods for a family meal. But they may not maintain adequate pressure, and they heat and cool too quickly to use them to safely pressure can foods.

Pressure canners have either dial or weighted gauges. Pressure canners are necessary to safely can foods such as meats and vegetables that are low in acid.

Pressure canners and pressure saucepans come in a wide variety of sizes. **Pressure canners** may hold up to 22 Quarts of canned food, and are able to process food at pressures up to 25 pounds. Some popular brands of pressure canners are Mirro, Presto, and All American. **Pressure cookers** usually hold no more than 4 to 6 Quarts, and they may, or may not, have a way to regulate the pressure. Some pressure cookers come equipped with a weight to cook at 5, 10 or 15 pounds of pressure, while others have no way to regulate pressure settings, or simply have settings of 'low', 'medium' and 'high'. Pressure cookers do not come with pressure gauges, and **they cannot be safely used to can foods.**

Pressure canners and pressure cookers work by trapping steam and building up pressure inside a pot. The steam is trapped because the lid, which is fitted with a rubber gasket, forms an airtight seal once it's locked into position. As the contents of the pot heat up, steam gets trapped and pressure builds. At 15 pounds pressure, water boils at 250°F, almost 40°F higher than in conventional pots. The high pressure and temperature destroy microorganisms more rapidly (pressure canning) or cook foods more quickly (pressure cooking).

Both pressure canners and pressure cookers that you'll find in the stores today are a far cry from their predecessors. The new 'second generation' pots are lighter in weight, and they have new built in safety features that release steam if the pressure gets too high-features that make them more fun and easy to use. If you are careful to follow the directions that accompany your pressure canner or cooker, you will enjoy using these contemporary pots.

For safe home canning recipes using a **pressure canner**, contact your local county Extension office for these booklets*:

B1159 Canning Vegetables Safely

B3345 Canning Meat, Wild Game, Poultry and Fish

B2605 Tomatoes Tart and Tasty

B2593 Using and Caring for a Pressure Canner

*There may be a charge for these publications. This information is also available online at this address: <http://.learningstore.uwex.edu>

(look under Home & Family, the Food and Nutrition section)