

Attractive & Safe Food Preservation Exhibits

Introduction

There's nothing to compare with rows of home canned goods on the shelf. Preserving the season's bounty is an aim many people strive for.

For all food preservation products, it is important to follow recommended processing procedures for a top quality product that is safe and wholesome for your family. Check with the Cooperative Extension Service for the latest USDA publications that give recommended procedures. It is important that you have not only an attractive exhibit, but one that is safe.

Jars

All canned products should be packed in clean, clear, standard size canning jars (jars and lids manufactured for home canning). Jars should be perfectly sealed with standard, two-piece lids that are free from rust or other deterioration.

Labels

Jars should be clean and labeled with the following information: name of product, date processed, type of pack, method used, time of processing, pounds of pressure (if appropriate) and name of exhibitor. All exhibits must be in standard containers in the size recommended for each product. Low acid exhibits are not opened for judging.



In judging canned products, three factors should be considered: the product, the liquid and the pack of the product.

Canned Fruits and Tomatoes

All canned fruits and tomatoes must be processed in a boiling water bath canner or a pressure canner. These products should be processed in a jar manufactured for canning and properly labeled.

Products at the prime stage of maturity have their best texture, color, flavor and nutritive value. Texture should be tender and firm but not mushy, tough or stringy. Fruits should be free from spots and blemishes, not only because they take away from overall appearance, but also because they could be a source of food spoilage.

Some fruits have specific recommendations:

Apples should be free of seeds and skin; pared and quartered or canned as sauce.

Apricots can be peeled or canned with skin left on; fruit should not float.

Peach halves should be packed cut side down in overlapping layers; fruit should be free from fuzz or skin.

Table of Contents

Canned Fruits and Tomatoes	1
Canned Meat and Fish	3
Canned Low Acid Vegetables.....	4
Pickles, Relishes, Chutneys and Catsups.....	5
Sweet Spreads	6

Plums pierced with a darning needle or knife are less likely to break in an unsightly way.

Rhubarb skin should be left on to give better shape and color.

Tomatoes should be packed in tomato juice instead of water for better color. Cut and whole tomatoes should not be combined in the jar. Color is important. Tomatoes should be free from cores and skin; seeds may show.

Appearance of the Product

Fruit or tomato:

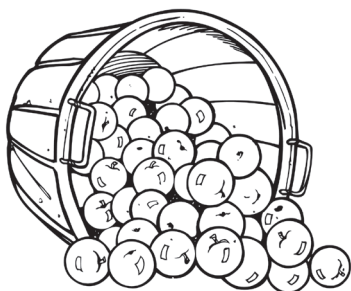
- Uniform in size, color and shape
- Well ripened, free of bruises and brown spots
- Fresh, tender or firm
- Has clean cut edges and is shaped well when preserved.
- Color as natural as possible; no artificial coloring
- Free from mold, discoloration or other indications of spoilage
- Packed with the correct headspace for product

Liquid:

- Clear, bright, free from sediment, cloudiness and bubbles
- Covers food in jar
- Syrup of consistency suitable for product

Container:

- Perfectly sealed
- Free from cracks, rust or other damage
- Properly labeled



Scorecard for Canned Fruits & Tomatoes

Consider		Possible	Score
Seal	- Unsealed or moldy jars	Disqualified	
Processing*	- Boiling water canner or - Pressure canner	*Disqualified if incorrect processing technique used and/or processing method not listed on label.	
Containers	- Standard canning jars and lids - No corrosion on lids or rings - Labeled with date, processing type and time - Clean and neat jars	20	
Appearance	- ½ inch headspace - Full pack - No floating fruit - No foreign matter - Uniform pieces - Clean edges - Proper maturity; no bruises, natural bright color	50	
Liquid	- Clear liquid - Covers solids to ½ inch of top of jar - Uniform juice	30	
Comments:			

Common Problems

- Fruit is soft and mushy (caused by overripe fruit or overcooking).
- Fruit looks hard (caused by underripe fruit).
- Fruit floats (caused by packing too loose, using too heavy a syrup or overripe fruit, or overprocessing).
- Applesauce may turn dark from overcooking with too much sugar.
- Water that has a high mineral content can cause fruits to discolor.

Canned Meat and Fish

All canned meat and fish should be processed in a pressure canner for the recommended time, packed in jars manufactured for canning and properly labeled.

Appearance of the Product

Meat:

- Firm, normal color, free of gristle and excess fat
- Cut across grain into uniform, attractive pieces
- Moist, not overcooked

Fish:

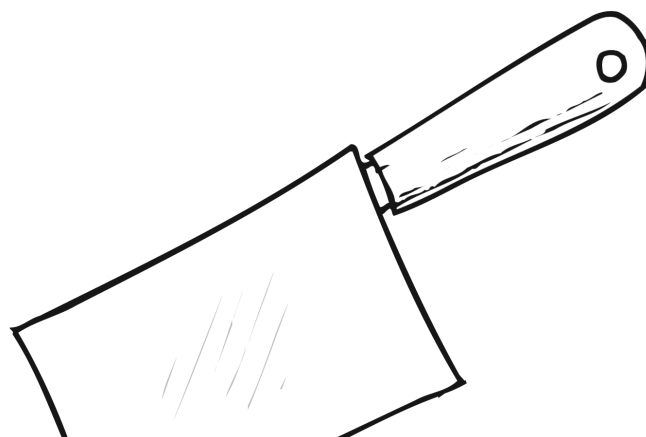
- Fish should be firm and of normal color.
- Skin and bones may be left; however, turning fish skin to the inside will give a more attractive pack.
- Fish may be cut into chunks or left in jar-length pieces.

Liquid:

- Liquid may be meat juices, tomato juice or water.
- Some meat juice gels when cold. This is an acceptable product.
- Liquid should be clear with little sediment.

Pack:

- Pieces of uniform size; appropriate size to serve
- Packed to within 1 inch of top of jar
- Full pack, but not too tight (to allow for proper heat penetration during processing)



Scorecard for Canned Meat & Fish

Consider		Possible	Score
Seal	- Unsealed or moldy jars	Disqualified	
Processing*	- Pressure canner	*Disqualified if incorrect processing technique used and/or processing method not listed on label.	
Containers	- Standard canning jars and lids - No corrosion on lids or rings - Labeled with date, processing type and time - Clean and neat jars	20	
Appearance	- 1 inch headspace - Uniform pieces - No air bubbles - No foreign matter - Clean cut edges - Uniform in color	50	
Liquid	- Clear liquid - Maximum ¼ fat - May be gelled due to natural gelatin; this is OK - In fish, liquid doesn't have to cover fish	30	
Comments:			

Canned Low Acid Vegetables

All low acid vegetables should be canned in a pressure canner for the recommended time appropriate for each vegetable. They should be packed in jars manufactured for canning and properly labeled.

Vegetables at prime stage of maturity have their best texture, color, flavor and nutritive value. Vegetables should be free from spots and blemishes, not only because they take away from overall appearance, but also because they could be a source of food spoilage.

Some vegetables have specific recommendations.

Beans may be whole or chopped into 1-inch pieces. Beans should be filled out, but young enough to be tender. There should be few, if any, free beans.

Carrots should be small, preferably 1 inch to 1¼ inches in diameter, and scraped or pared well. They should have a smooth surface with no evidence of skin.

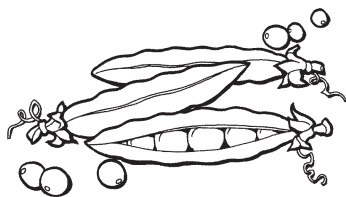
Corn should have distinct kernel in fairly clear liquid. Pack should be full, but not too dense, free from silks or pieces of cob.

Greens should be shrunk before putting in jar, with heavy stems removed and thoroughly washed — no grit or dirt in jar. Pack should be full but not too tight. Color should be bright green.

Peas that are old will have a cloudy liquid.

Appearance of the Product Vegetable:

- Prime stage of maturity, tender and firm, not tough, woody or mushy
- Uniform in size and shape; natural, clear, bright color
- Free from indications of spoilage



Liquid:

- Clear; free from cloudiness, bubbles or extraneous material. Liquid should cover food in sufficient quantity to make a loose pack.

Pack:

- Firm but not tight
- Sufficient liquid for proper heat penetration and good eating
- Pieces well arranged to use the space to advantage
- Proper headspace for vegetable (starchy vegetables 1 inch, others ½ inch)

Common Problems

Cloudy liquid can be caused by starch from over-ripe vegetables or it may be a sign of spoilage.

Scorecard for Canned Vegetables			
Consider		Possible	Score
Seal	– Unsealed or moldy jars	Disqualified	
Processing*	– Pressure canner	*Disqualified if incorrect processing technique used and/or processing method not listed on label.	
Containers	– Standard canning jars and lids – No corrosion on lids or rings – Labeled with date, processing type and time – Clean and neat jars	20	
Appearance	– 1 inch headspace – No foam or air bubbles – Firm pack – No foreign matter – Uniform pieces – Proper stage of maturity – Bright, natural color – Smooth, clean edges	50	
Liquid	– Clear liquid – Covers solids to within 1 inch of top of jar	30	
Comments:			

Pickles, Relishes, Chutneys and Catsups

Pickles should have the natural color of the product from which they are made. Cured and fresh pack cucumbers should change from bright green to olive green (no artificial coloring). The flavor should be natural to the fruit or vegetable or a pleasant combination. Vegetables should not be too sour or over-spiced. Flavor should be pleasing.

Non-iodized salt is recommended for making pickles because iodine will darken them. Flavors of pickles improve after a few weeks or a month in sealed jars.

Products should be processed in jars manufactured for canning in a boiling water canner and properly labeled.

Appearance of the Product Product:

- Products should be uniform in size, color and shape.
- Pieces should be plump, not shrunken.
- Pickled fruits should be tender and plump, with unbroken skins.
- Pickled cucumbers should be uniformly crisp and firm, transparent or semitransparent appearance.
- Relishes should have uniform pieces, semitransparent in appearance.

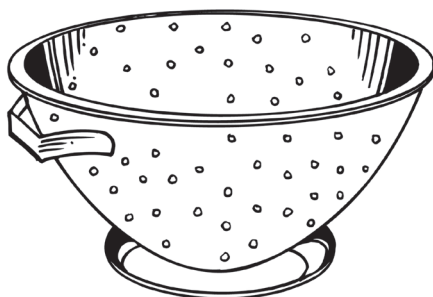
Liquid:

- Clear
- Natural color
- Adequate to cover product

Pack:

- Filled, allowing ½ inch headspace
- Attractive and economical pack of solids and liquids
- Full pack without crowding

Scorecard for Pickles, Relishes, Chutneys & Catsups			
Consider		Possible	Score
Seal	- Unsealed or moldy jars	Disqualified	
Processing*	- Boiling water canner	*Disqualified if incorrect processing technique used and/or processing method not listed on label.	
Containers	- Standard canning jars and lids - No corrosion on lids or rings - Labeled with date, processing type and time - Clean and neat jars	20	
Appearance	- ½ inch headspace - No foam or air bubbles - No foreign matter - Good proportion of solid to liquid - Uniform size and shape - Smooth, clean edges - Bright, clear color	50	
Liquid	- Adequate to cover solids to ½ inch of top of jar - Clear, no sediment	30	
Comments:			



Sweet Spreads

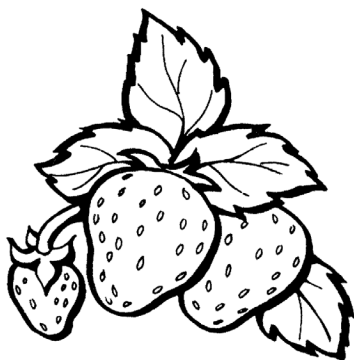
Sweet spreads are a class of foods with many textures, flavors and colors. They all consist of fruits preserved with sugar and are thickened or jellied to some extent. All spreads should be processed in a boiling water bath canner. Here are the definitions of spreads:

Jelly is a semisolid mixture of fruit juice and sugar that is clear and firm enough to hold its shape. It should cut easily with a spoon and retain shape when cut. It should be tender, not tough or stringy or thin and syrupy. Jelly should be transparent and free of sediment or cloudiness.

Jams are made from whole, small fruits or the fleshy portion of large fruits. No effort is made to preserve the shape of the fruit as it is crushed or jammed together. It is thick enough to spread and easily divided into portions with a spoon. Jam will hold its shape, but is less firm than jelly.

Preserves are made of small, whole fruits or uniform pieces of fruits in a clear, thick, slightly jellied syrup. The shape of the pieces is retained. The product should be largely fruit, but it should be well permeated with syrup throughout.

Marmalades are soft fruit jellies with small pieces of fruit or citrus peel evenly suspended in a transparent jelly.



Conserves are similar to jams, but they always contain a mixture of fruits and usually have nuts and sometimes raisins added.

Fruit butters are smooth, even, fine-grained mixtures of medium-soft consistency, without seeds or distinct pieces of fruit. There is no evidence of juice as a separate liquid. Butters are less sweet than jams, marmalades or conserves.

Appearance of the Product

Product:

- Consistency of product matches above definition
- Color is characteristic of the fruit and is free from discoloration

Pack:

- Free from air bubbles and foam
- Filled allowing ¼ inch headspace

Scorecard for Sweet Spreads			
Consider		Possible	Score
Seal	– Unsealed or moldy jars	Disqualified	
Processing*	– Boiling water canner	*Disqualified if incorrect processing technique used and/or processing method not listed on label.	
Containers	– Standard canning jars and lids – No corrosion on lids or rings – Labeled with date, processing type and time – Clean and neat jars	20	
Appearance	– ¼ inch headspace – No foreign matter – Jelly: firm, no fibers – Jam: flows slightly – Butter: flows slightly – Conserves, marmalades, preserves: pieces in thick, syrupy gel – Uniformly thick, no water – Clear, clean – Bright color	50	
Liquid	– Clear, clean – Sparkling – Jelly: clear – Jam: opaque – Butter: translucent	30	
Comments:			

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