

pressure canning

for BEGINNERS

Bonus Chapter





Fish and Shellfish

Canning the Catch of the Day



Other than commercially canned tuna or salmon, most people don't often think about canned seafood. It's a shame. If you have access to in-season oysters, clams, crabs, shrimp and fish, canning them is a good way to have them all year long and not fill up your freezer.

Keep in mind that canned fish and shellfish will never be "just like fresh." Canned seafood is good for making things like fish patties, dips and even adding to soups, but it's not good for making things like shrimp cocktails or oysters Rockefeller. The texture will be different.

Of all the things you can preserve by pressure canning, canning fish and shellfish has the most varied instructions based on what you're canning. Because of this, I've included detailed instructions for canning each type of seafood in the recipe section of this chapter and seafood soup recipes such as clam chowder (pages xx and xx) and Gumbo (page xx) in the soup chapter.

While it's important to follow current safe canning guidelines whenever you're canning, it's especially important when canning fish and seafood. Many saltwater and freshwater animals ingest *C. botulinum* spores, making those spores present in their intestinal tract. It's important to clean fish and shellfish properly and follow the preparation guidelines for each type of seafood being canned.

Like other canned goods, dried herbs can be safely added to canned fish and shellfish (page xx).

Because canning seafood is not as practical for me as canning other types of meat, and because it's labor intensive, I rarely can seafood. But I believe that no book on pressure canning would be complete without a section on how to can various seafoods for those who have an abundance of seafood and wish to can it.

Fish

Fatty fishes make good canned fish. In fact, they can even be raw packed, which makes canning them super easy. Fishes that are good for canning include . . .

- *Catfish*
- *Blue*
- *Salmon*
- *Trout*
- *Northern pike*
- *Mackerel*
- *Steelhead*
- *Smelt*
- *Tuna (has its own specific canning instructions)*

Panfishes are leaner than fatty fishes and don't make good canned fish. Fishes that are not good for canning include . . .

- *Whiting*
- *Sole*
- *Bass*
- *Perch*
- *Walleye*
- *Crappies*
- *Tilapia*
- *Flounder*
- *Other pike*

There are a couple of fish that aren't as fatty as the fatty fishes but are still good for canning and benefit from oil being added. Those fish are . . .

- *Halibut*
- *Cod*

Fatty fishes that are not tuna and have not been smoked can be canned in 1-quart (1-L) jars, but the process is much more involved and the processing time is much longer. For this reason, I suggest only canning fish in 1-pint (500-ml) jars and half-pint (250-ml) jars (page xx). I have not included instructions for canning fish in 1-quart (1-L) jars in this book.

Tuna is a fatty fish but is handled differently for canning and has its own instructions (see page xx).

Smoked fish can also be canned but has its own instructions (see page xx).

For best results, you'll want to can fish that's been freshly caught. The internal organs should be removed within 2 hours of catching and the fish should be kept on ice or in a refrigerator until it's canned.

If you can't can the fish the same day it's been caught or the day after, it should be frozen to preserve it. If you decide to can it later, it must first be thoroughly thawed in the refrigerator and rinsed with cold water.

The head, tail and scales should be removed. The bones in small fish can be left in as they will soften when canned and are a good source of calcium.

The skin can be removed or left on. When you open a jar of canned fish to use, the meat will easily come off the skin. Some people like the look of the jars with the skin side out so they leave the skin on. The jars are little harder to clean when they are packed with the skin side out, but it's not a huge deal.

If you are canning halibut, the skin and bones need to be removed.

Be aware that glass-like crystals of struvite—magnesium ammonium phosphate—sometimes form in canned salmon and tuna. There is no way to prevent the crystals from forming in a home-canning setup; however, they are harmless and will usually dissolve when the canned meat is heated.



Caption TK

Shellfish

Most shellfish, such as clams, oysters, shrimp and some crab, can be canned at home. Be forewarned, though: It takes a lot of shellfish to fill enough jars to properly use a pressure canner. You will need eight half-pint (250-ml) jars or four 1-pint (500-ml) jars.

If you find that you don't have enough shellfish to properly fill the canner, you can use jars of water in the canner as placeholders. Remember, a pressure canner must have the equivalent of two 1-quart (1-L) jars in the canner for it to pressurize correctly. The jars of water will need to be filled to 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace and have lids added to them. After canning, you can remove the lids and discard the water or use the canned water as part of your emergency water supply.

Clams and oysters should be kept live on ice until you're ready to can them. While they are similar, the process for canning clams (page xx) and the process for canning oysters (page xx) are not the same.

Shrimp does not need to be kept live but does need to be kept fresh on ice until you're ready to can it. It will also need to be peeled and deveined (see recipe on page xx).

King and Dungeness crabs can be canned; however, the process leaves a distinct acidic flavor in the meat, and for quality reasons, it's not recommended. Freezing is the recommended method of preserving crab. There are also no recommended guidelines for canning blue crab, which is the crab I have access to. For these reasons, I haven't included instructions for canning crab meat in this book.

Lobster shouldn't be canned at home, as there are no approved guidelines for doing so.

Catfish and Cold-Water Fish

Canned fish is softer than fish that has been baked or fried, but that makes it great for adding to salads and soup. You can use it to make fish cakes or even as a stuffing for peppers.

Yields 8 (Half-Pint [250-ml]) or 4 (1-Pint [500-ml]) Jars

6 lbs (2.7 kg) whole fresh fish or
3 lbs (1.4 kg) fish fillets
2 tbsp (30 ml) vinegar
5 quarts (4.7 L) water
1 cup (292 g) non-iodized salt

If the fish is frozen, thaw it completely in the refrigerator before canning. If the fish is fresh, it should've had its internal organs removed within 2 hours of being caught and kept on ice until you're ready to can it. Prepare fresh fish by removing the head, tail and scales (page xx).

Wash the fish to remove any blood that's still on the fish. You can add vinegar to the water to help remove any slippery residue; add 2 tablespoons (30 ml) of vinegar per 1 quart (960 ml) of water.

I recommend soaking the fish in a saltwater brine of 1 cup (292 g) of non-iodized salt and 1 gallon (3.8 L) of water for 15 minutes to 1 hour. This step is optional but will remove any remaining blood and will firm up the fish for a better end product.

While the fish is soaking, prepare the pressure canner, jars and lids. Wash the inside of the pressure canner and the rack with hot, soapy water. Place the rack in the pressure canner and fill it with a few inches (8 cm) of water, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Place the canner on the stovetop and heat the water over medium heat.

Wash the lids in hot, soapy water and set aside. Check the instructions on the box of lids; some manufacturers (Bernardin®) recommend that the lids be placed in boiled water to keep them hot and some manufacturers recommend that the lids simply be washed (Ball®).

Wash the jars in hot, soapy water and check for any nicks or cracks along the rim of the jar. The jars need to stay hot, so I put them in the canner after washing them. The water in the canner should be hot but not boiling. Set the lid on the canner but don't lock it in place.

Cut the fish into jar-size lengths; remember, you'll need 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. Pack the fish into the hot, straight-sided jars work best for fish, leaving 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. You might need to use a small silicone spatula to move the pieces around to pack them tightly.

Fatty fishes don't need any water or broth added to them; however, if you are canning halibut, you can add 2 tablespoons (30 ml) of vegetable or olive oil per 1-pint (500-ml) jar. This will help the halibut seem more moist.

Wipe the rims with a clean, damp cloth and add the lids and bands. Tighten the bands to finger-tight, like you would a mayonnaise jar. Place the jars in the prepared pressure canner and lock the lid in place. Process the jars at 10 psi (69 kPa) for 100 minutes for both half-pint (250-ml) jars and 1-pint (500-ml) jars, adjusting for altitude if necessary (page xx).

Be sure to let the canner vent for 10 minutes and fully come up to the correct pressure before you start timing.

When the fish is finished processing, turn off the heat and allow the canner to naturally depressurize. This will take 30 to 60 minutes. Refer to the instructions that came with your canner.

After processing, allow the canner to depressurize naturally. Open the canner and transfer the jars to the counter. Let them cool for at least 12 hours. Remove the bands, check the seals and store the jars for up to 1 year. If any jars fail to seal, put them in the refrigerator to use first.

For serving, canned fish can be enjoyed straight out of the jar in salads or on crackers. It can also be used to make fish cakes and added to casseroles and soups.



Tuna with Oil or Water

This canned tuna recipe is the foundation for stocking your pantry with tuna for any occasion. You can easily add your favorite dried spices and flavorings such as lemon and pepper or Cajun seasoning to the jars to create custom flavors. Unlike other canning recipes, tuna can be packed in oil instead of water.

Yields 8 (Half-Pint [250-ml]) or 4 (1-Pint [500-ml]) Jars

6 lbs (2.7 kg) whole fresh tuna or
3 lbs (1.4 kg) tuna fillets

4 tsp (24 g) non-iodized salt

1 cup (240 ml) water or vegetable
oil for packing

**Flavor Variations Per
Half-Pint (250-ml) Jar:**

1/8 tsp spice blend or ground spices

1 tsp lemon juice

Pinch of red pepper flakes

If the tuna is fresh, it should've had its internal organs removed within 2 hours of being caught and kept on ice until you're ready to can it. Wash the tuna in cold water and place the fillets, skin side up, on a rack or metal tray to let the blood drain from the stomach cavity. This should take about 5 minutes or so.

If you're using freshly caught tuna, you'll notice a blood line of dark meat along the spine of the fish when you're filleting it. Don't use this dark meat for canning, as it has a very strong flavor. We use it for dog food.

Tuna can be pressure canned either raw or precooked. Precooking it removes most of the strong-flavored oils, so I precook it. If you are going to raw pack tuna, follow the same procedures for canning fatty fishes (page xx), but remove the skin before canning it.

Wash the tuna to remove any blood that's still on the fish. Cut the tuna in half crosswise, if necessary, to fit on a baking sheet. Place the tuna on a clean baking sheet, skin side down, and bake at 350°F (177°C) for 1 hour, or until the internal temperature reaches 165°F (74°C) to 175°F (79°C).

Remove the tuna from the oven and refrigerate it overnight to firm up the fish. This will allow you to easily remove the skin, bones and any dark meat. If you're using tuna fillets that have the skin and bones removed, you can skip the refrigeration step and go ahead and can the tuna the same day.

Wash the inside of the pressure canner and the rack with hot, soapy water. Place the rack in the pressure canner and fill it with a few inches (8 cm) of water, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Place the canner on the stovetop and heat the water over medium heat.

Wash the lids in hot, soapy water and set aside. Check the instructions on the box of lids; some manufacturers (Bernardin®) recommend that the lids be placed in boiled water to keep them hot and some manufacturers recommend that the lids simply be washed (Ball®).

Wash the jars in hot, soapy water and check for any nicks or cracks along the rim of the jar. Straight-sided jars work best for canning tuna. If you are canning in half-pint (250-ml) jars, straight-sided jars can be either wide-mouth or the tall regular-mouth jars that are used for jelly. If you are canning in 1-pint (500-ml) jars, use wide-mouth jars. The jars need to stay hot, so I put them in the canner after washing them. The water in the canner should be hot but not boiling. Set the lid on the canner but don't lock it in place.

Tuna can be packed with water or oil, whichever you prefer. Heat water or vegetable or olive oil in a pan over medium heat while you prepare the tuna. Packing the tuna in oil will make the tuna moister than packing it in water; however, it adds more cost and calories.

Remove the tuna from the refrigerator and peel the skin off of it with a knife. Be sure to remove blood vessels and any discolored flesh, as it will have a strong flavor. Cut the meat away from the bones. All bones, skin, fin bases and dark meat should be discarded.

Cut the tuna into lengths that will fit into the jars with 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. Pack the tuna into the hot jars, leaving 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. You might need to use a small silicone spatula or a wooden spoon to move the pieces around to pack them tightly.

You can add 1 teaspoon of non-iodized salt per 1-pint (500-ml) jar, if desired. Add any other dried spices or herbs, for extra flavoring.

Pour hot water or oil into the jars. Use a bubble remover to gently move the tuna around so that the water or oil fills in all the spaces. Add more water or oil if necessary to achieve 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace.

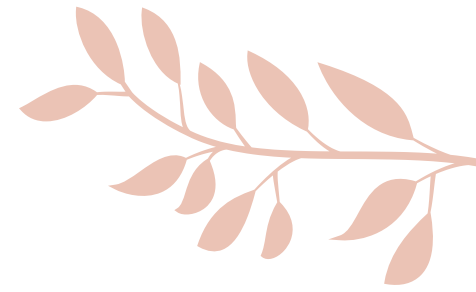
Wipe the rims with a clean, damp cloth and add the lids and bands. Tighten the bands to finger-tight, like you would a mayonnaise jar. Place the jars in the prepared pressure canner and lock the lid in place. Process the jars at 10 psi (69 kPa) for 100 minutes for both half-pint (250-ml) jars and 1-pint (500-ml) jars, adjusting for altitude if necessary (page xx).

Be sure to let the canner vent for 10 minutes and fully come up to the correct pressure before you start timing.

After processing, allow the canner to depressurize naturally. Open the canner and transfer the jars to the counter. Let them cool for at least 12 hours. Remove the bands, check the seals and store the jars for up to 1 year. If any jars fail to seal, put them in the refrigerator to use first.

Be aware that glass-like crystals of struvite—magnesium ammonium phosphate—sometimes form in canned tuna. There's no way to prevent the crystals from forming in a home-canning setup; however, they are harmless and will usually dissolve when the fish is heated for serving.

For serving, drain the liquid from a jar and then remove the tuna. The tuna can be used in salads, in casseroles and to make tuna patties. Our favorite way to use canned tuna is to add it to macaroni and cheese along with broccoli and other vegetables to make a one-pot meal.



Smoked Salmon and Other Fish

Canning smoked salmon takes a little more time than canning fresh fish, but it's well worth the effort. Canned smoked salmon is delicious right out of the jar and it makes a fantastic addition to dips and other appetizers. The salmon in this recipe can be substituted with any fatty fishes you happen to have available. Remember that the smoked flavor can intensify under pressure.

Yields 8 (Half-Pint [250-ml]) or 4 (1-Pint [500-ml]) Jars

6 lbs (2.7 kg) whole fresh fish or
3 lbs (1.4 kg) fish fillets
2 tbs (30 ml) vinegar
11 cups (2.6 L) water
1 cup (292 g) non-iodized salt

**This process is ONLY for smoked fish; there are no safe processing times for other smoked seafood, such as oysters. The directions for filling the pressure canner are different for smoked fish than they are for other pressure-canned products. Please follow the directions exactly. Also, you must use a 16- to 22-quart (15- to 21-L) pressure canner to can smoked fish. Smaller pressure canners such as the All American® 910 and 915 don't allow for adequate heating and cooling times for safe processing. I have not found anything to be cautious of while using a pressure canner that's larger than 22 quarts (21 L) for canning smoked fish.*

If the fish is frozen, thaw it completely in the refrigerator before canning it. If the fish is fresh, it should have had its internal organs removed within 2 hours of being caught and kept on ice until you're ready to can it. Prepare fresh fish by removing the head, tail and scales (page xx).

Wash the fish to remove any blood that's still on it. You can add vinegar to the water to help remove any slime; add 2 tablespoons (30 ml) of vinegar per 1 quart (960 ml) of water.

Cut the fish into lengths that will fit into the jars with 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. It's best to try to cut them so that each piece is the same thickness throughout so that it smokes evenly.

Before smoking the fish, it needs to be brined in 7 cups (1.7 L) of water and 1 cup (292 g) of non-iodized salt. Prepare the brine and add the fish pieces. Pieces that are ½ inch (1.3 cm) thick or smaller should be brined for 10 minutes and pieces that are thicker than ½ inch (1.3 cm) should be brined for 30 minutes. The brining is important to prevent spoilage.

Remove the fish from the brine and pat it dry with a clean kitchen towel. Allow the fish to dry on a cooling rack until the outer surface feels just barely tacky; this should only take about 5 to 10 minutes.

While the fish is brining, prepare your smoker. Ideally, the temperature should be about 140°F (60°C) to 160°F (71°C) for smoking fish for canning. If you can't get it that low, that's fine, just try to keep it under 200°F (93°C), as you don't want the fish to cook.

Weigh one of the fish pieces and write down the weight. Since the fish will not be cooked when it comes out of the smoker, you shouldn't taste it to see if it's smoked enough; therefore, doneness is determined by weight.

Put the fish pieces in a pan that is suitable for the smoker and smoke the fish for up to 2 hours. At any point, you can remove the piece of fish that you weighed and weigh it again. Once it has lost 10 to 12 percent of its weight, the fish can be canned. Don't smoke fish for longer than 2 hours, even if it hasn't lost 10 to 12 percent of its weight.

Wash the inside of the pressure canner and the rack with hot, soapy water. Place the rack in the pressure canner and fill it with 1 gallon (3.8 L) of cool tap water. NOTE: After you add the filled jars to the canner, the water level might reach the top of the screw bands on the jars. Do NOT decrease the amount of water or heat the water before the processing begins.

Wash the lids in hot, soapy water and set aside. Check the instructions on the box of lids; some manufacturers (Bernardin®) recommend that the lids be placed in boiled water to keep them hot and some manufacturers recommend that the lids simply be washed (Ball®).

Wash the jars in hot, soapy water and check for any nicks or cracks along the rim of the jar. Straight-sided jars work best for canning fish. The jars don't need to stay hot; they just need to be clean.

Pack the fish into the jars, leaving 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. You might need to use a small silicone spatula to move the pieces around to pack them tightly. The skin is usually easy to remove at this point if you want to remove the skin before packing the pieces into the jars.

Wipe the rims with a clean, damp cloth and add the lids and bands. Tighten the bands to finger-tight, like you would a mayonnaise jar. Place the jars in the prepared pressure canner and lock the lid in place. Process the jars at 10 psi (69 kPa) for 110 minutes for both half-pint (250-ml) jars and 1-pint (500-ml) jars, adjusting for altitude if necessary (page xx).

After processing, allow the canner to depressurize naturally. Open the canner and transfer the jars to the counter. Let them cool for at least 12 hours. Remove the bands, check the seals and store the jars for up to 1 year. If any jars fail to seal, put them in the refrigerator to use first.



Be aware that glass-like crystals of struvite—magnesium ammonium phosphate—sometimes form in canned salmon and tuna. There's no way to prevent the crystals from forming in a home-canning setup; however, they are harmless and will usually dissolve when heated.

For serving, smoked salmon can be enjoyed straight out of the jar with crackers, sprinkled on salad or served on a toasted bagel with cream cheese, onions and capers. It can also be used to make fried salmon patties and dips or added to casseroles and soups.



Clams

Because clams need to be kept alive until cooked, they can be expensive and hard to come by year round. But if you live near the coast, clams are abundant when in season and canning them to use later is a great option.

Yields 8 (Half-Pint [250-ml]) or 4 (1-Pint [500-ml]) Jars

250–300 clams in shells
1¼ gallons (4.7 L) water
1 tsp non-iodized salt
2 tbsp (30 ml) lemon juice or ½ tsp citric acid

Prepare the pressure canner, jars and lids. Wash the inside of the pressure canner and the rack with hot, soapy water. Place the rack in the pressure canner and fill it with a few inches (8 cm) of water, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Place the canner on the stovetop and heat the water over medium heat.

Wash the lids in hot, soapy water and set aside. Check the instructions on the box of lids; some manufacturers (Bernardin®) recommend that the lids be placed in boiled water to keep them hot and some manufacturers recommend that the lids simply be washed (Ball®).

Wash the jars in hot, soapy water and check for any nicks or cracks along the rim of the jar. The jars need to stay hot, so I put them in the canner after washing them. The water in the canner should be hot but not boiling. Set the lid on the canner but don't lock it in place.

Fill a large stockpot with 2 to 3 inches (5 to 8 cm) of water and heat over medium heat.

Put the clams in a large bin of cold water, scrub the shells with a brush and rinse.

Turn the heat under the stockpot to high, add the clams to the pot and steam for 5 minutes. You'll probably need to work in batches and add more water to each batch to replace what evaporated. Remove the open clams from the stockpot and set the, aside to cool. If any clams didn't open, you can steam them for another 5 minutes to see if they open. Discard any clams that don't open after the second steaming.

Remove the clam meat from the clam shells and put the meat in a bowl. Reserve the clam juice, which is the water that was used for steaming the clams, for filling the jars. Strain the clam juice through a fine-mesh strainer to remove any sediment. The strained clam juice can be put in a pot on the stove and kept hot over low heat.

Wash the clam meat in 1 quart (960 ml) of water with 1 teaspoon of non-iodized salt added. Rinse the clam meat in fresh water. Put the clam meat in a medium stockpot and cover with 1 gallon (3.8 L) of water. Add 2 tablespoons (30 ml) of lemon juice or ½ teaspoon of citric acid to help the clams retain their color. Boil for 2 minutes and then drain.

You can leave the clams whole or mince them at this point.

Pack the clams into the hot jars, leaving 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. Cover the clams in the jars with the strained hot clam juice. Remove the air bubbles from the jars and recheck the headspace. Add more hot clam juice if needed to maintain 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. If you run out of clam juice, you can use hot water.

Wipe the rims with a clean, damp cloth and add the lids and bands. Tighten the bands to finger-tight, like you would a mayonnaise jar. Place the jars in the prepared pressure canner and lock the lid in place. Process the jars at 10 psi (69 kPa) for 60 minutes for half-pint (250-ml) jars and 70 minutes for 1-pint (500-ml) jars, adjusting for altitude if necessary (page xx).

After processing, allow the canner to depressurize naturally. Open the canner and transfer the jars to the counter. Let them cool for at least 12 hours. Remove the bands, check the seals and store the jars for up to 1 year. If any jars fail to seal, put them in the refrigerator to use first.

For serving, canned clams along with the liquid can be used to flavor rice or added to soups. They can also be added to alfredo sauce for a quick and easy creamy pasta dish., or they can be strained from the liquid and used to top pizza or in a seafood dip.



Shrimp

Canned shrimp is great to keep on hand for making a quick shrimp salad or a baked shrimp and artichoke dip, or really any recipe where small or diced shrimp is called for. You can add dried herbs or spices to the jars to make custom flavors.

Yields 8 (Half-Pint [250-ml]) or 4 (1-Pint [500-ml]) Jars

1 cup (240 ml) vinegar
1½ cups (328 g) non-iodized salt
2 gallons (7.6 L) water
4 lbs (1.8 kg) shrimp, heads removed

Prepare the pressure canner, jars and lids. Wash the inside of the pressure canner and the rack with hot, soapy water. Place the rack in the pressure canner and fill it with a few inches (8 cm) of water, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Place the canner on the stovetop and heat the water over medium heat.

Wash the lids in hot, soapy water and set aside. Check the instructions on the box of lids; some manufacturers (Bernardin®) recommend that the lids be placed in boiled water to keep them hot and some manufacturers recommend that the lids simply be washed (Ball®).

Wash the jars in hot, soapy water and check for any nicks or cracks along the rim of the jar. The jars need to stay hot, so I put them in the canner after washing them. The water in the canner should be hot but not boiling. Set the lid on the canner but don't lock it in place.

Put a large teakettle or small stockpot full of water on the stove and heat over medium heat.

Prepare a brine of 1 cup (240 ml) of vinegar, 1 cup (292 g) of non-iodized salt and 1 gallon (3.8 L) of water in a large stockpot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Add the shrimp to the stockpot and boil for 10 minutes.

Drain the shrimp in a colander and rinse in cold water for a few minutes, until the shrimp have cooled. Peel and devein the shrimp. Rinse the peeled shrimp in cold water one more time.

Prepare a canning brine of 2 tablespoons (36 g) of non-iodized salt and 1 gallon (3.8 L) of water in a large stockpot and bring to a boil.

Pack the shrimp into the hot jars, leaving 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. Add dried herbs or spices to each jar, if desired. Cover the shrimp in the jars with hot brine. Remove the air bubbles from the jars and recheck the headspace. Add more hot brine if needed to maintain 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace.

Wipe the rims with a clean, damp cloth and add the lids and bands. Tighten the bands to finger-tight, like you would a mayonnaise jar. Place the jars in the prepared pressure canner and lock the lid in place. Process the jars at 10 psi (69 kPa) for 45 minutes for both half-pint (250-ml) jars and 1-pint (500-ml) jars, adjusting for altitude if necessary (page xx).

After processing, allow the canner to depressurize naturally. Open the canner and transfer the jars to the counter. Let them cool for at least 12 hours. Remove the bands, check the seals and store the jars for up to 1 year. If any jars fail to seal, put them in the refrigerator to use first.

For serving, empty a jar of shrimp into a colander and rinse them in cold water. Canned shrimp can be chopped and added to dips, soups and salads. It can even be used as a pizza topping.



Oysters

Like clams, fresh oysters can be hard to find year round, but they're abundant when in season. Keeping canned oysters on hand ensures you have them when you need them. You can even add a little liquid smoke to the jars to make smoked oysters in a can, just remember that the smoked flavor will get stronger when pressure canned.

Yields 8 (Half-Pint [250-ml]) or 4 (1-Pint [500-ml]) Jars

80–100 oysters in shells

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup (192 g) cup non-iodized salt

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ gallons (4.7 L) water

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp liquid smoke per half-pint (240-ml) jar (optional)

Prepare the pressure canner, jars, and lids. Wash the inside of the pressure canner and the rack with hot, soapy water. Place the rack in the pressure canner and fill it with a few inches (8 cm) of water, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Place the canner on the stovetop and heat the water over medium heat.

Wash the lids in hot, soapy water and set aside. Check the instructions on the box of lids; some manufacturers (Bernardin®) recommend that the lids be placed in boiled water to keep them hot and some manufacturers recommend that the lids simply be washed (Ball®).

Wash the jars in hot, soapy water and check for any nicks or cracks along the rim of the jar. The jars need to stay hot, so I put them in the canner after washing them. The water in the canner should be hot but not boiling. Set the lid on the canner but don't lock it in place.

Put a large teakettle or small stockpot full of water on the stove and heat over medium heat.

Preheat the oven to 400°F (204°C).

Put the oysters in a large bin of cold water, scrub the shells with a brush and rinse them.

Put the cleaned oysters in a baking dish and bake for 57 minutes, or until the shells start to crack open. While they are baking, prepare a large bowl of ice water.

Cool the oysters briefly in the ice water, then drain them. Open the oysters and remove the meat.

Prepare a large bowl of saltwater containing $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (144 g) of non-iodized salt per 1 gallon (3.8 L) of water. Wash the oysters in the salt water and then drain the water.

Pack the oysters into the hot jars, leaving 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace. Cover the oysters in the jars with hot water. You can add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of non-iodized salt per 1-pint (500-ml) jar, if desired. You can also add a drop or two of liquid smoke to the jars to make smoked oysters, if desired. Remove the air bubbles from the jars and recheck the headspace. Add more hot water if needed to maintain 1 inch (2.5 cm) of headspace.

Wipe the rims with a clean, damp cloth and add the lids and bands. Tighten the bands to finger-tight, like you would a mayonnaise jar. Place the jars in the prepared pressure canner and lock the lid in place. Process the jars at 10 psi (69 kPa) for 75 minutes for both half-pint (250-ml) jars and 1-pint (500-ml) jars, adjusting for altitude if necessary (page xx).

After processing, allow the canner to depressurize naturally. Open the canner and transfer the jars to the counter. Let them cool for at least 12 hours. Remove the bands, check the seals and store the jars for up to 1 year. If any jars fail to seal, put them in the refrigerator to use first.

For serving, canned oysters and their juices can be added to soups, casseroles, dips and stuffing. They can be used whole or chopped.

