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EC945 Canning Poultry

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
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W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln Circular
945

CANNING POULTRY

The canning of poultry has become a part of the year round canning program. It is profitable to can the roosters and the hens that have quit laying. Either the year old or older birds that are in prime condition may be canned. Plump, well-fed hens, two years old, or a rooster eight to ten months, have as good texture and a better flavor than six months old chickens.

Shutting up the birds in a clean, cool crate and giving them all the clean feed and fresh water and milk that they want for a week will soften the tough fibers of older birds so that the meat will be more tender. See Extension Circular 1472 for further information. It is best not to feed the chickens for at least twenty-four hours before killing. This insures a clean alimentary tract that helps to make the work of dressing more pleasant and results in a better flavored flesh.

Bleeding quickly and thoroly are both essential to securing a good flavor. This may be done by severing the jugular vein or cutting off the head with a very sharp hatchet and letting the neck hang down so that the blood will drain from the body. To cut off the head, hold the ends of the wings tightly with the legs until the chicken quits jerking. If the neck is wrung the chicken dashes about in such a fashion that the body is bruised as well as soiled with blood and dirt.

After the feathers have been picked, the bird singed, the feet cut off and the skin well cleaned, remove the crop and entrails, then wash thoroly so as to remove blood that may have accumulated. Cut the bird into individual pieces as for any ordinary service except the breast piece should be left whole, the tips of the wings removed and the white meat removed from the ribs (shoulder blades) in two pieces. Trim off any large pieces of fat so that they may not interfere with the penetration of heat. Do not allow the meat to stand in water as this extracts the juices and makes the meat tough. Cool very thoroly. It is advisable to kill and dress the birds the day before they are to be canned.

Equipment

A steam pressure cooker is the best type of equipment for canning meats, but the water bath or the oven method are both used successfully by careful workers. In using the water bath or oven method, extreme care must be observed. Because of the difficulty in standardizing oven temperatures a time table for oven processing is not given in this circular. Temperatures of 240 to 250 degrees are recommended for adequate sterilization of foods low in acidity. Such high temperatures can be obtained in the interiors of jars and cans only in steam pressure cookers. A temperature of 212 degrees F. is the maximum temperature possible to be reached in jars that are not being processed under pressure. Research has shown that some bacterial spores may survive 212 degrees F. for as long a time as six hours. The spores of "clostridium botulinum" which may cause food poisoning, are not destroyed at a temperature of 212 degrees F. unless this temperature is maintained for at least six hours. It is for these reasons that the Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D. C., does not recommend either the water bath or oven method for the canning of non-acid foods.

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Good, new rubbers are essential, or if self seal topped jars are used, the tops should be new. Wash and rinse all jars and lids well before using.

Precooking

Preheating may be done by several different methods. Some of the methods which are not included in this circular are being successfully used. However, the methods given below are recommended because research has found them to be safe methods for the average worker.

The aim in preheating is to heat the meat thoroly. It is not desirable, however, to preheat until the meat is cooked to doneness, because the meat would become overcooked during the canning process. Preheating may be done by one of the following methods:

Precooking in hot water. Cook the pieces of the chicken in about a pint of boiling water in a covered pan for ten minutes. Adding a small amount of water makes it possible to use all of this broth in the jar when the pieces have been packed. After the chicken has cooked ten minutes, remove the skin from the breast and with a sharp knife cut the flesh from the breast bone in two large pieces.

Searing in hot fat. Melt fat which may be stripped from various pieces. If not sufficient, supplement with some other good fresh fat. Sear the pieces (without rolling in flour) until they are a delicate brown. Pack while hot, into hot jars.

Packing Chicken into Jar

After the chicken has been precooked it is ready to pack into the jars. Pack the chicken without cramming. Leave space for liquid to circulate around the meat. The following suggests a method for packing a four pound chicken in a quart jar:

1. Place a drumstick with the thick end down in the hollow of the back, holding the tail end up. Place these in the jar, skin side of the back next to the glass and the cut end resting on the bottom of the jar.
 2. On either side of the back place the two pieces of breast meat.
 3. Next pack the two wings with the elbows resting on the bottom.
 4. Place the thighs above the wings with the skin side out.
 5. Packing the pieces around the jar in this manner leaves a small space in the center. In this space insert a drumstick with the small end down.
 6. Place the shoulder blades on top.
 7. Fill the jar up to within one-fourth of an inch of the top with boiling hot liquid from the pan in which the chicken was cooked; or if seared in hot fat dilute fat with broth prepared from bony pieces and pour over meat.
 8. Fully seal tin cans or partial seal glass jars.
 9. Processing in boiling water. If the altitude is over 1,000 feet, increase the time 10% for each additional 500 feet.
- Processing in pressure cooker. If the altitude is over 2,000 feet, increase the pressure 1 pound for each additional 2,000 feet.

	No. 2 tin can	No. 3 tin can
	Pt. glass jar	Qt. glass jar
Pressure	60 min. at 15 lbs.	70 min. at 15 lbs.
	80 min. at 10 lbs.	90 min. at 10 lbs.
*Water bath hot pack	3 hrs.	3 hrs.

*For 2 quart jars, increase the processing time 50%.