

PRESERVE IT FRESH, PRESERVE IT SAFE PEPPERS



When preserving fresh foods at home, follow proper procedures to prevent foodborne illness. These safety tested methods can be used for freezing, canning, and pickling peppers. For salsa and other recipes containing peppers, see *Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe Tomatoes*, MF1185.

Freezing

Freezer manuals offer guidelines for the maximum amount that can be frozen at one time to maintain quality — usually 2 to 3 pounds of food for each cubic foot of freezer space.

Quantity

Three peppers or about $\frac{2}{3}$ pound yields 1 pint frozen.

Quality

Select firm, yellow, green, or red peppers free of disease and insect damage.

Bell or sweet: Sweet or bell peppers can be frozen without blanching. Blanching peppers are limp and easier to pack but only suitable for cooked dishes. Select crisp, tender, green or bright red pods. Wash and cut peppers in half, removing stems, seeds, and white membrane. Cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch strips or rings, or dice depending on use.

Blanched — Water blanch halves 3 minutes, strips or rings 2 minutes. Cool promptly, drain, package, seal, and freeze.

Unblanched — Package raw, seal, and freeze.

Hot peppers: Wash and stem. Package raw. Seal and freeze. *Caution:* To prevent burning your hands when handling hot peppers, wear rubber gloves. Do not touch your eyes.

Pimientos: Select firm, crisp pimientos of deep red color. Peel by roasting in the oven 400° to 450°F for 6 to 8 minutes or until skins can be rubbed off. Wash off the charred skins, cut out stems and remove seeds. Package, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of headspace. Seal and freeze.

Canning

To learn about canning methods, see *How-to Guide to Water Bath Canning and Steam Canning* (MF3241) and *How-to Guide to Pressure Canning* (MF3242).

Wash jars. Preheating is optional for standard metal lids. If desired, heat in simmering but not boiling water. If using reusable plastic lids with rubber rings, follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Peppers

Quality

Select firm yellow, green, or red peppers including chilies, jalapenos, and pimientos. Do not use soft or diseased peppers.

Quantity

An average of 9 pounds is needed for a 9-pint canner load. A bushel weighs 25 pounds and yields 20 to 30 pints — an average of 1 pound per pint.

Peeling methods

Wash peppers. Peel peppers by placing them in a 400° to 450°F oven for 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from oven and allow them to stand in a wet towel to steam for 15 minutes. Remove skin, stem and seeds. Another way to peel is to blister the skin of the peppers thoroughly on a hot range or with a flame, turning frequently to prevent scorching. Steam the peppers as directed above. Slash skin and insert a knife at the tapered end, pulling skin off toward stem. Remove stem and seeds. Flatten whole peppers to remove air.

Procedure

Select your favorite type of pepper. *Caution:* Wear rubber gloves when handling hot peppers or wash hands thoroughly with soap and water. Avoid touching your face.

Small peppers may be left whole. Large peppers may be quartered. Remove cores and seeds. Slash two or

four slits in each pepper and either blanch in boiling water or peel using one of the peeling methods described above.

Add ½ teaspoon of salt to each pint jar, if desired. Fill jars loosely with peppers and add fresh boiling water, leaving 1 inch of headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust if needed. Wipe jar rims with a clean, damp paper towel. Apply lids and rings fingertip-tight. Process in a pressure canner as directed in Table 1.

Turn off heat and let canner depressurize naturally, and remove canner lid. Let jars cool 5 minutes, and then remove from canner; do not retighten bands. Cool completely, check seals, label, and store.

Pickled Bell Peppers

Yield: About 9 pints or 18 half-pints

- 7 pounds firm bell peppers
- 3½ cups sugar
- 3 cups vinegar (5%)
- 3 cups water
- 9 cloves garlic
- 4½ teaspoons canning or pickling salt

Wash peppers, cut in quarters, remove cores, seeds, and blemishes. Slice into strips. Boil sugar, vinegar, and water for 1 minute. Add peppers and bring to a boil. Place ½ clove garlic and ¼ teaspoon salt in each sterile half-pint jar; double amounts for pint jars. Add pepper strips and cover with the hot vinegar mixture, leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with a clean, damp paper towel. Apply lids and rings fingertip-tight. Process in a water bath canner or steam canner according to instructions in Table 2. Turn off heat and remove canner lid. Cool jars for 5 minutes. Remove jars from canner; do

not retighten bands. Cool completely, check seals, label, and store.

Pickled Hot Peppers

Hungarian, banana, chile, jalapeño

Yield: About 9 pints or 18 half-pints

- 4 pounds hot long red, green, or yellow peppers
- 3 pounds sweet red and green peppers, mixed
- 5 cups vinegar (5%)
- 1 cup water
- 4 teaspoons canning or pickling salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cloves garlic

Caution: Wear rubber gloves when handling hot peppers or wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching your face.

Wash peppers. If small peppers are left whole, slash two to four slits in each. Quarter the large peppers. Blanch in boiling water or peel using one of the peeling methods described on page 1. Cool and remove skin. Flatten small peppers. Fill hot jars, leaving ½-inch headspace.

Combine and heat remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil and simmer 10 minutes. Remove garlic. Pour the hot pickling solution over peppers, leaving ½ inch of headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with a damp, clean paper towel. Apply lids and rings fingertip-tight. Process in a water-bath or steam canner according to the instructions in Table 2.

Turn off heat and remove canner lid. Let jars cool 5 minutes. Remove jars from canner; do not retighten bands. Cool completely, check seals, label, and store.

Table 1. Recommended processing times in a pressure canner for plain peppers ONLY

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (min.)	Canner gauge pressure for different altitudes (in feet)			
			Dial gauge (lbs.)		Weighted gauge (lbs.)	
			0-2,000	2,001-4,000	0-1,000	Above 1,000
Hot	Pints	35	11	12	10	15

Pickled Pepper-Onion Relish

Yield: about 4 pints or 9 half-pints

- 6 cups finely chopped onions
- 3 cups finely chopped sweet red peppers
- 3 cups finely chopped green peppers
- 1½ cups sugar
- 6 cups vinegar (5%), preferably white distilled
- 2 tablespoons canning or pickling salt

Wash and chop vegetables. Combine all ingredients and boil gently until mixture thickens and the volume is reduced by one-half (about 30 minutes). Fill sterile jars with hot relish, leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if necessary. Wipe rims of jars with a damp clean paper towel. Apply lids and rings fingertip-tight. Store in the refrigerator and use within one month. *Caution:* If you plan on storing for some time, process in a boiling water bath or steam canner according to directions in Table 2. Turn off heat and remove canner lid. Let jars cool 5 minutes. Remove jars from canner; do not retighten bands. Cool completely, check seals, label, and store.

Piccalilli

Yield: about 4 pints or 9 half-pints

- 6 cups chopped green tomatoes
- 1½ cups chopped sweet red peppers
- 1½ cups chopped green peppers
- 2¼ cups chopped onions
- 7½ cups chopped cabbage
- ½ cup canning or pickling salt
- 3 tablespoons whole mixed pickling spice
- 4½ cups vinegar (5%)
- 3 cups brown sugar

Procedure

Wash, chop, and combine vegetables with ½ cup salt. Cover with hot water and let stand 12 hours. Drain and press in a clean white cloth to remove all possible liquid. Tie spices loosely in a spice bag, add to the combined vinegar and brown sugar, and heat to a boil in a saucepan. Add vegetables and boil gently for 30 minutes or until volume is reduced by one-half. Remove spice bag.

Fill hot, sterile jars with the hot mixture, leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if necessary. Wipe rims of jars with a damp clean paper towel. Apply lids and rings fingertip-

tight. Process in a boiling water bath canner or steam canner according to Table 2. Turn off heat and remove canner lid. Let jars cool 5 minutes. Remove jars from canner; do not retighten bands. Cool completely, check seals, label, and store.

Remove screw bands and check lid seals. If the center of the lid is indented, wash, dry, label, and store jar in a clean, cool, dark place. If the lid is unsealed, examine and replace the jar if defective. Use new lids and reprocess within 24 hours of initial processing. Otherwise, store unsealed jars in the refrigerator and use them first. Wash screw bands and store separately. Consume canned foods within a year of processing.

Problems and Solutions

1. Can pickled peppers be pressure canned?

It is not recommended to pressure can pickled peppers. This high-heat treatment causes peppers to become too soft and mushy. Water bath canning is the best processing method for pickled peppers.

2. Why are non-pickled peppers pressure canned?

Peppers are a low acid food. Without added acid, such as vinegar, they must be pressure canned to make them safe.

3. In mixed vegetable pickled products with peppers, can any kind of pepper be used?

Yes. Any variety of pepper can be used because of similar acid content. Do not, however, change the amount of peppers called for in the recipe. Any changes will alter the acidity of the recipe and make it unsafe.

4. When handling hot peppers, what causes the burning sensation on the skin?

Hot peppers contain a compound called capsaicin, which can burn the skin. Wear rubber gloves when handling hot peppers and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching your face.

Table 2. Recommended processing times for pickled peppers in a boiling-water canner or steam canner

Product	Style of pack	Jar size	Processing times in minutes at different altitudes (in feet)	
			0- 1,000	1,001-6,000
Pickled bell peppers	Hot	Half-pints or pints	5	10
Pickled hot peppers	Raw	Half-pints or pints	10	15
Pickled pepper-onion relish	Hot	Half-pints or pints	5	10
Piccalilli	Hot	Half-pints or pints	5	10

Nutritional Analysis

	Calories	Carbohydrate (g)	Fat (g)	Vit. C (mg)	Dietary Fiber (g)	Sodium (mg)
Frozen Peppers (½ cup) All varieties	12.0	2.6	0.2	64.0	1.9	1.7
Canned Peppers (½ cup) All varieties	13.0	2.7	0.2	32.6	0.8	276.0*
Pickled Bell Peppers (1 tbsp.)	12.0	3.0	0.0	7.0	0.3	34.0
Pickled Hot Peppers (1 tbsp.)	5.0	1.3	0.0	21.0	0.2	30.0
Pickled Pepper-Onion Relish (1 tbsp.)	15.0	4.0	0.0	7.4	0.2	89.0
Piccalilli (1 tbsp.)	18.0	4.6	0.0	7.0	0.4	358.0

*Salt can be left out to reduce sodium content in canned plain peppers.

Revised by Karen Blakeslee, M.S., Extension Associate, Food Science

Adapted from original by Karen P. Penner, Ph.D., and Jeanne Dray, April 1995

Complete Guide to Home Canning, USDA AIB No. 539, 2009; and *So Easy to Preserve*, 6th ed., The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

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