

# Jar It Right!

## Choosing and Using Canning Jars



**R**egular and wide-mouth, threaded Mason-type jars are the recommended choice for atmospheric steam, boiling water-bath and pressure canning methods of preserving foods at home. Jars for home-based canning are available in a wide variety of sizes, including 4-ounce, ½-pint, pint, 1½-pint, quart and ½-gallon sizes. With careful use and handling, and use of a research-tested recipe and processing time, jar seals and vacuums are excellent and jar breakage is rare.

Traditional Mason-type jars sometimes are in short supply, so home-based canners may wish to consider commercial pint- and quart-size glass mayonnaise or salad dressing jars for some canning applications. Glass mayonnaise jars are acceptable for use in water-bath canning processes, such as fruit sauces, but *not for pressure canning*. Mayonnaise-type jars generally are made from thinner glass, so you should expect more seal failures and jar breakage when reusing them.

Be sure the jar that you choose fits the lid you are using for quality and safety. Remember that metal lids can be used only one time, but the metal rings can be used many times.

**The most important step in home food preservation: Follow an up-to-date, research-tested recipe. See <https://nchfp.uga.edu> and the food preservation resources at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food).**

### Best practices for canning with Mason-type jars.

These tips will help ensure that the items you can at home are delicious and safe:

- Wash jars and lids with warm, soapy water and rinse well before each use. You can use a dishwasher to wash jars and hold jars warm and ready for canning.
- Carefully inspect jars for nicks and cracks.
- Consult your canning recipe and processing directions to find out whether the jars should be warmed prior to use.
- Be sure to monitor head space and wipe jar rims before applying the lid to help ensure a good seal.

Sterilizing jars prior to canning is not required if the processing time recommended by a researched-based recipe is longer than 10 minutes. If the processing times are less than 10 minutes, such as for jams and jellies, sterilizing the jars will help ensure a longer shelf life.

- To sterilize empty jars, boil for 10 minutes (at altitudes less than 1,000 feet) prior to filling. At higher elevations, boil one additional minute for each additional 1,000 feet of elevation.

**Purchasing canning jars.** Many national retailers, grocery stores, kitchen specialty stores, hardware stores and some online sites sell traditional Mason-type jars. High-quality jars can be reused many times.

**CAUTION:** In 2020-21, many customers noticed that canning supplies ordered online were of inferior quality. To ensure quality, consider ordering directly from the manufacturer or its representative, not from a third-party vendor.

See [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food) for more information.

and members of the North Central Food Safety Extension Network (NCFSEN)

