Guidelines for using a Steam Canner for Home Food Preservation*  

The University of Wisconsin-Madison conducted research showing that an atmospheric Steam Canner may be used to safely can naturally acid foods such as peaches, pears, and apples, or acidified-foods such as salsa or pickles. The atmospheric steam canner uses only ~2 quarts of water (compared to 16 quarts, or more, in a boiling water canner) so you heat less water and processing can start more quickly. **Safe processing in a steam canner requires that all the following criteria are met:**

- Foods must be high in acid, with a pH of 4.6 or below. Foods may naturally be high in acid (most fruits) or have added acid. Either a Boiling Water Canner or a Steam Canner may be used to safely preserve foods high in acid.

- An up-to-date, research-tested recipe is used. Approved recipes for boiling water canning may be safely adapted for use in a steam canner. Acceptable recipes are available from sources such as the National Center for Home Food Preservation: [https://nchfp.uga.edu/](https://nchfp.uga.edu/) or Wisconsin’s Safe Food Preservation series: [https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/safefood/](https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/safefood/) (see Safe Preserving Recipes)

- Make the following adjustments to an approved recipe for a boiling water canner: **at the processing step,** place filled jars on the canner rack above hot/preheated water. Place the lid on the canner and heat, on high, until the canner vents. A full 6-8” column of steam will flow out of the vent holes in the canner. Once the canner continuously produces a full column of steam from both vents for at least 30 seconds, **start timing.** Process time is based on the time for a boiling water canner. Adjust heat, as needed to ensure the canner vents during the entire process time.

- Jars are processed in **pure steam at 210-212°F.** Steam must flow freely from the canner vent(s) during the **entire process,** or the food is considered under-processed/unsafe. NOTE: To check canner operation, run a test trial with a stem thermometer in one of the ports to check processing temperature.

- **Adjust processing time for elevation.** Add 5 minutes to processing time for each 1,000 feet above sea level. Check elevation: [https://www.advancedconverter.com/map-tools/find-elevation-of-address](https://www.advancedconverter.com/map-tools/find-elevation-of-address)

- Jars must be **heated prior to filling** and filled with hot liquid (raw or hot pack). Jars of **half-pint, pint, or quart size** may be used, depending on the jar size acceptable in the recipe.

- Processing time should be limited to **45 minutes or less, including any modification for elevation.** The processing time is limited by the amount of water in the canner base. When processing food, the canner should **not be opened** to add water. Regulate heat so that the canner maintains a temperature of 210-212°F. A canner that is boiling too vigorously can boil dry within **20 minutes.** If a canner boils dry, the food is considered under-processed and therefore potentially unsafe.

- Cool jars in **still, ambient air.** Jars should be cooled on a rack or towel away from drafts.

*NOTE: only the Back-to-Basics and the Victorio dome-style canner models tested in our laboratory are known to produce safe food when a tested recipe is used. Other models or style are not recommended at this time. Rev. 8/18/2020 bingham@wisc.edu