

# Home Canning, Smoked Fish & Home Smoking Fish for Canning

The following directions for canning smoked fish are a result of research conducted at Oregon State University. Oregon researchers determined the processing times and conditions needed to reach a temperature within the fish that is hot enough to destroy the spores of the *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria — the bacteria that can cause botulism.

It is important to follow these directions carefully to ensure a safe and good-tasting product. Please read directions thoroughly before beginning the smoking and canning processes.

Smoked fish is considered a delicacy in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Whether you catch it yourself or purchase it at the store, fish can be smoked successfully at home.

Contrary to popular belief, smoking is not a true food preservation technique — it changes the flavor and texture of the product but does not "preserve" or create a shelf-stable product. Even refrigeration won't guarantee that smoked fish will stay safe to eat. The bacteria that cause botulism food poisoning could start to grow after 2 to 3 weeks of refrigeration.

For long-term storage, smoked fish must be frozen or canned. Canning is preferred by many who smoke fish at home. Canned smoked fish must be processed in a pressure canner to destroy *Clostridium botulinum* spores.

The length of processing time needed to guarantee safety can affect the quality of home-canned smoked fish. Canning tends to dry the fish, darken the color and intensify the smoked flavor. However, it is not safe to reduce the processing time to less



probably will reach the screw bands of pint jars.)

**Do not decrease the amount of water or heat the water before processing begins.** Doing so could result in underprocessing because the canner will heat up and cool down more quickly.

3. Pack smoked fish vertically into jars, leaving 1 inch headspace between the pieces and the top of the jar. The fish may be packed either loosely or tightly.
4. Wipe rims of jars with a damp paper towel to remove any fish or oil and center cleaned flat lids on the jars. Carefully apply the ring (screw band) and tighten until "finger tip" tight.
5. Put jars into the canner on a rack. Jars may be double-stacked by placing another rack over the jars on the bottom layer. Secure lid on canner.
6. Turn the burner to high and heat the canner until a steady stream of steam escapes from the air vent.
7. "Exhaust" the canner by allowing a steady stream of steam to escape for 10 minutes. This prevents cold spots in the canner that may result in underprocessing.
8. Close the petcock or cover the vent and adjust the heat to reach the required pressure. After reaching the recommended pressure, adjust the heat to maintain a steady pressure for the duration of the canning time. At sea level, process pint jars for 110 minutes (1 hour and 50 min-

## FOR SAFETY'S SAKE — HEAT HOME CANNED FISH BEFORE EATING!

- Do you know if the dial gauge on your canner is reading accurately?
  - Do you know when the rocking or jiggling weight is signaling properly?
  - Did you follow the USDA Cooperative Extension Service recommendations for pressure processing this food?
  - Was this preserved food a gift? If it was, do you know if the USDA Cooperative Extension Service recommendations for pressure processing this food were followed?
3. Place the opened jar in an oven that has been preheated to 350 degrees F.
  4. Remove jar from the oven when the meat thermometer registers 185 degrees F. Heating takes about 30 minutes.
  5. Allow the jar to stand at room temperature for about 30 minutes to let the heat distribute evenly.
  6. Serve the fish hot or chill for later use.
  7. If jar is recovered, cover with a clean lid.

If you answered no to any of these questions, you should heat this home canned food before you eat it. Here's how:

1. Open the jar of fish. Check the contents. If fish smells bad or if you see gas bubbles, **THROW CONTENTS AWAY! Do not taste!\***
2. If fish smells and looks good, insert a meat

*\* Before you throw it away, detoxify so that no humans or pets can get poisoned by eating spoiled foods. To detoxify, open jars and carefully place them, along with canning lids, on their sides in a large pan with a lid. Add water to cover jars, put lid*