



# Award Winning Canning

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# Fairs, Festivals and Special Events

- Objectives for conducting & judging competition events:
  - To appreciate standards of safety and quality.
  - To recognize entries which best represent recommended standards.
  - To decide which entries achieve their intended purpose most effectively.
  - To determine ranking of competing articles in relation to one another.



## Proper Headspace

- $\frac{1}{4}$  inch for jams and jellies.
- $\frac{1}{4}$  inch for apple juice, grape juice & fruit puree.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  inch for other fruit products, pickles, & tomatoes processed in a water bath canner.
- 1 inch for fruit pie fillings with Clear Jel<sup>®</sup>;  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch for green tomato pie filling.
- 1 inch for vegetables, meats or other products processed in a pressure canner (1  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches for quart jars of fresh lima beans).
- 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch for poultry.



## The Pack



- The most **important** consideration in judging the pack of canned food its safety.
- Food must be packed into the jar in a way that allows heat to easily penetrate throughout the jar's content.
- There must be a proper balance of solids and liquids.
- Liquid should cover the product and be able to circulate freely throughout the jar.



- Excess liquid or very loose packs of solids is a waste of jar space.
- This is not a safety issue, but not practical.
- Points should be deducted for excessive liquid in a solid pack.
- Fancy packs are dangerous and should be deducted as the core cannot heat well.



# Quality

- The **quality** of fresh food and the care with which it is handled are major factors influencing the appearance of a canned product.
- Product should be canned when it is young and tender.
- There should not be blemished, decayed spots or sunburned spots.
- Canning should occur at peak level of ripeness when canned.



- Pieces should be appropriate to the particular product.
- Product must be uniform in size.
- If recipe calls for peeled fruit or vegetables, food with peels and skins should be disqualified.
- Peels and skins carry high numbers of microorganisms.



- Product should
  - Appear tender but not mushy.
  - Hold its shape and show no signs of overcooking.
  - Edges can be examined to detect mushiness.







# Liquids

- Any liquids
  - Should be fairly clear and free of cloudiness or sediment.
  - Starchy vegetables may have a slightly cloudy liquid but no starchy sediment.
  - It's ok for liquid in foods with dark-colored water soluble pigments, such as tomatoes and berries to have a color characteristic of the product rather than being colorless.




- No separation.
  - Separation of tomato juice into a yellowish clear layer and red layer happens from enzymes found naturally in the tomatoes.
  - A higher quality product will not have this problem; it is prevented or minimized by
    - 1. heating the tomatoes immediately after peeling and cutting.
    - 2. By squeezing rather than blending the tomatoes into juice.



# Appearance

- Canned products should be that of a well cooked product.
- Foods that look raw or just cut most likely have not been processed at all.
- Color should be uniform.



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- Darkening of food pieces is undesirable quality.
    - Due to too much air being trapped in headspace.
    - Use of raw packs.
    - Excessively tight bands during canning.
    - Poor quality of raw food.
    - There should be no signs of over or under processing.
  - Sweet Corn: some varieties do not can well.
    - Varieties with high sugar can turn extremely brown.



- Over-maturity is judged by appearance;
  - Excess starchiness (peas and beans)
  - Softness or mushiness (fruit, some vegetables)
  - Large or loose distribution of seeds in **cucumber** products (e.g. are the seeds loose and floating around or still intact in the food piece, are they larger than is normal for optimum ripeness)
  - Discoloration of seeds (yellowish or pale in cucumbers, dark or brown to pinkish in snap beans)



- Sprouting of seeds (tomatoes).
- Browning of cut edges (snap beans).
- Dull, unnatural colors.
  - Poor color control or lack of appropriate pretreatments is judged by browning on edges of light-colored fruits.
  - Poor choice of raw pack over hot pack is indicated by excessive trapped air bubbles, floating food pieces above covering liquid, and darkening of food at the surface.
  - Overcooking is indicated by poor color and mushiness.



- Artificial coloring is considered undesirable as the color can mask quality of product.
- Attractiveness and attention to detail are judged by:
  - Consistency and appropriateness of piece size.
  - Absence of foreign matter, seeds, pits, peel, root hairs on vegetables, stems.
  - Good, characteristic, natural and bright colors as well as freedom from discoloration.
  - Lids that are clean and dry; bands that are not rusted, corroded, bent or misshapen.
  - Neatness and attractiveness of exhibit.



- Absence of non-recommended ingredients such as noodles, rice, flour, oils.
- Absence of gas bubbles, cloudiness, sediments and foreign materials.
- Absence of stains, other signs of leaking.
- Flavor of vegetables is usually indicated by the maturity of the product and its general appearance.





## Double Check for.....

- Foreign matter:
  - Strings, pits, skins, stems, cores, meat gristle or tendons.
  - Air Bubbles should be kept at a medium. A high number of bubbles may be a sign of spoilage.





# Cleanliness

- Cleanliness of the container and lids. If you have a milky film on the outside of the jar or lid, try using a vinegar and water soaked cloth to wipe it off.
- Labels must be neat and clean.
  - Easy to read
  - Contain all required information
  - Product must be canned and labeled in current year.



# Follow Recipe

- Use of recommended jars and lids.
- Use of recommended processing methods, times and styles.
- Use of recommended headspace and pack style.
- Proper balance of solids and liquids.
- Lids are clean and new; bands are not rusted or corroded.
- I think I will add...





# Jellies

- Jellies: ¼” head space
  - Should have clarity and color.
  - Consistency: Turn jar on it’s side and give a single, sharp shake. Rotate the jar slowly at an angle or on it’s side. Jelly should pull away from the jar cleanly, without breaking and without leaving any residue on the jar.
  - The entire mass of jelly should be able to roll around inside the jar in one mass.
  - If shaking doesn’t work, tap bottom with heel of hand.



- Should be sparkling, transparent or translucent.
- Exception: Pepper jellies will be a little cloudier or have a slight amount of pulp.
- Color: Natural, close to characteristic color of original juice.

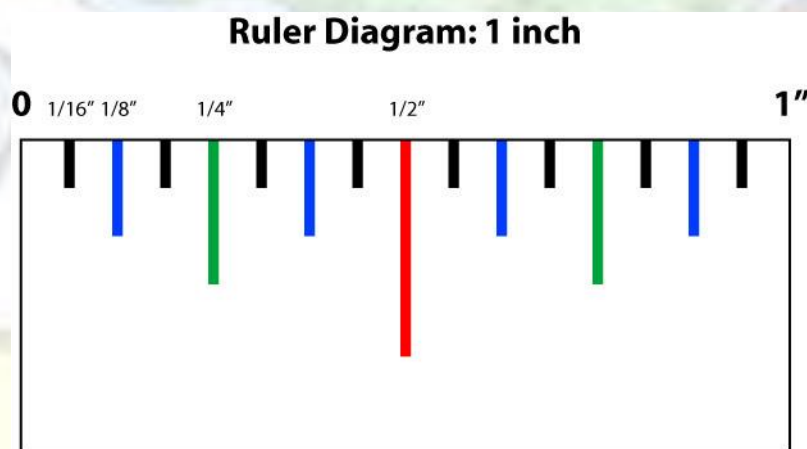




- Clarity – Even though there is no separated jelled juice, jam and conserve should be translucent and not “muddy” looking.
- No layering should occur, sediment, cloudiness or crystals.
- Jams have a natural coloring, free of discoloration, especially from burning or scorching in preparation.



- Pack –  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch headspace, free from air bubbles and foam.
- Consistency – Smooth, thick, uniform throughout. Easily spreadable; not too stiff. Not runny, gummy or syrupy.





# Preserves

- Consists of small, whole fruits or uniformly sized pieces of larger fruits in a very thick syrup or slightly jellied juice.
- Very thin slices of lemon may be added.
- The pieces of fruit or citrus peel are suspended in a clear, translucent jelly.
- Fruit pieces are tender and hold their shape. Pieces of fruit are uniform in size.





- Made from fruit pulp.
- Smooth with even, fine-grained textures of medium-soft consistency.
- It should move very slowly and in a solid mass.
- Natural coloring.
- Thick enough to mound, not runny. No separation of fruit and juice. No pieces of skin, seeds or other foreign matter.



# Pickles

- Pickles are uniform in size and shape.
- Relishes should not be chopped or ground too fine.
- No ragged edges.
- No floating pieces.
- Pieces should be plump, not shriveled or shrunken.
- Liquid should be clear, no cloudiness or foreign matter.



# Good Luck!

- Rules to remember:
  - Follow the recipe **exactly**.
  - Use the correct product
  - Make use equipment, jars and lids are **clean**.
  - Use recipes from 1988 and forward.
  - Have your pressure gauge checked yearly.



# Source

- *Judging Home Preserved Foods.* National Center for Home Food Preservation. University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, College of Family and Consumer Sciences in cooperation with the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.