

**P**reserving food harvested from gardens, fruit trees, farms, rivers, lakes, sea and woods keeps food to eat in times when less is available.

enzyme changes may cause spoilage. Proper handling, storage and preservation practices are needed to stop spoilage and pathogenic growth.

Food left unprotected will begin to change color and flavor and eventually spoil and decompose.

Factors affecting microbial growth include the nutrients in the food, the food's level of acidity, the temperature at which it is kept, the time food spends at certain temperatures, exposure to oxygen and amount of moisture in or around the food.

**Acidity:** Foods are considered high-acid or low-acid, depending on their pH.

*High-acid foods* are those that contain natural acid. The pH of acid food is 4.6 or below. Each food is different and may vary in acidity. Generally, all fruits are high-acid.

The vegetable rhubarb, sauerkraut and foods to which vinegar is added, such as certain pickles and relishes, have high-acid pH.

*Low-acid food* contains very little natural acidity.

The pH of low-acid food is 4.6 or above. Low-acid foods are vegetables, meats, poultry, seafoods, mushrooms and soups. Mixed canned foods, which might contain part low-acid and part high-acid foods (such as soups), should be treated as low-acid food.

The importance of acidity to the home canner is that molds and yeasts, which exist in high-acid foods, are easily destroyed by heating filled jars in briskly boiling water for a period of time. Some bacteria, however, thrive in low acids and cannot readily be destroyed at boiling water temperatures. For these, raising the temperature of the canner to



240°F stops bacteria fast and is safe for low-acid foods.

dry air at 212°F is not as hot as moist air at 212°F.

**Small Pressure Cookers:** Pressure saucepans, small pressure cookers and electric multi-cookers work similarly to pressure canners. However, pressure cookers must be able to hold four quart jars on a rack with room for air to go over and around, to be used as a pressure canner.

Choose the type of food preservation that works best for the food to be used. Have the equipment needed and use current, research-based recipes for having a tasty, healthy food to enjoy.

USDA *Complete Guide to Home Canning*. Online version: [http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications\\_usda.html](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_usda.html)

Print version: [https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/item.asp?item\\_number=AIG-539#.VWTLiZ-RdWrY](https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/item.asp?item_number=AIG-539#.VWTLiZ-RdWrY)

*National Center for Home Food Preservation.*  
University of Georgia Cooperative Extension:  
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