



FOOD SAFETY:

Whatcom County Master Food Preservers & Safety Advisors
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<http://whatcom.wsu.edu>

Suggestions for Pressure Canner Check-up and Cleaning

1. Reread directions that came with the canner unless used so frequently that this is not necessary.
2. Check the openings to the petcock, safety valve, and pressure gauge for cleanliness. If opening becomes clogged and remains so during canning, dial or slide pressure gauge may not register the correct pressures, and all the air may not be driven out in 10 minutes. Also the safety valve may fail to work when the pressure gets too high.
3. If necessary, remove petcock and safety valve and soak in vinegar for a short time.
4. Otherwise, unscrew the ball-end socket type of safety valve and clean. Clean the ball and socket into which the ball fits with sliver polish.
5. Clean the openings with a toothpick or other small sharp-pointed tool. Clean the petcock and safety valve often by drawing a string or narrow strip of cloth through them.
6. Clean the edges of the canner and cover; if necessary, scrub with whiting and water. Dried food, dirt, or scale formed by hard water on either edge may prevent a tight seal and allow steam to leak out.
7. Clean the remainder of the canner. Stains may be removed from inside of canner with fine steel wool pads and soap. If canner becomes stained from "hard" water, boil a solution of 2 level tablespoons cream of tarter to a quart of water in the container. A strong vinegar solution is also effective. Water stains on cover may be removed with mild cleansing powder or silver powder.
8. Be sure all grease is washed from the gasket. If gasket is hard, stretched, or cracked it may be necessary to replace it. If the steam escapes around the cover examine the sealing edge of utensil and cover; if they are not smooth, clean with a fine cleansing powder. If the gasket is reversible, turning it over may improve the seal. Leakage makes it difficult to obtain the right pressure and may cause the cooker or canner to boil dry.

9. To get rid of odor or taste, put water in the canner to a 1-inch level, a big handful of potato peels, and any racks and pans. Heat for 15 minutes at 15 lbs. pressure. Cool. Wash canner, pans, and racks in hot soapy water; rinse and dry.

10. DO NOT:
 - a. Do not immerse the lid in water; instead wipe it off with a soapy cloth and then a clean damp cloth. Dry thoroughly.
 - b. Do not use strong soaps on aluminum.
 - c. Do not use harsh scouring powders.

11. Examine the steam gauge and if possible, check it against a master gauge. The following visual clues will often tell you whether a gauge is still reliable.
 - a. The pointer of the gauge should rest against the pin at the 0 reading when there is no pressure in the canner.
 - b. The pointer should move smoothly when pressure is being built up in the canner. If it jerks or sticks, the gauge should be replaced.
 - c. The gauge should not be damaged externally such as having a dented case or broken glass. These, if present, would indicate that the gauge has received a hard blow, which could throw it out of calibration. If there was trouble with the gauge when the canner was last used, it is a reasonable assumption that it is off calibration and replacement would be advisable.

12. Finally, assemble the canner, then put water in it and bring up to the pressure in the usual way to see that it is in good working order.

For more information about using and caring for your pressure canner please contact your local Extension Office or call the Whatcom County WSU Extension at 360/676-6736.

A local dealer, who services and repairs pressure canners and sells replacement parts, reports that about 2% of new pressure canner gauges are off calibration. This would imply that even a new pressure canner should have the gauge checked before using.

