PRESTO®
Test Kitchen

LET'S PRESERVE TOGETHER

PROVIDING GUIDANCE IN HOME FOOD PRESERVATION
Boiling Water Canning
Pressure Canning
Vacuum Sealing
Dehydrating

ISSUE NO. 9 - APRIL, 2026

Buying a Used Pressure Canner

What You Need to Know Before You Bring it Home

This time of year, it's common to see pressure canners popping up for sale on online marketplaces, thrift stores, garage sales, and resale shops. For many people, this can be an appealing opportunity—either to try pressure canning without a big upfront investment or to pick up a backup canner at a bargain price.

However, while a used canner can be a smart buy, it can also come with risks. Some secondhand units are in excellent condition, while others may have hidden issues that could affect both performance and safety. Taking a careful, informed approach before purchasing is essential.

Is It Safe to Use a Used Pressure Canner? Safety is often the first concern—and understandably so. Pressure canners and cookers have a reputation for being intimidating for some people, largely due to stories of accidents. In reality, most of these incidents are the result of user error rather than equipment failure. Still, understanding built-in safety features is key.

A major turning point in pressure canner safety came in 1979, when UL 136 standards began requiring household pressure canners and cookers to include locking mechanisms. Models manufactured from 1979 onward are designed so that the lid locks into place when pressure is present, preventing it from being opened accidentally.

Modern canners also include multiple safety features:

- **Air vent/cover lock**: A visible indicator (metal pin) that rises when pressure builds and locks the lid.
- **Vent pipe**: The primary outlet that regulates pressure.
- **Overpressure plug**: A backup safety feature that releases pressure if it builds too high.
- **Pressure relief valve**: An additional safeguard against overpressure situations.

These features work together to make pressure canning much safer than many people assume—provided the canner is in good condition and used correctly.

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What to Look for When Buying a Used Pressure Canner

Before purchasing a used canner, take time to inspect it carefully. Here are the most important factors to consider:

1. **Check for Warping or Damage.** Place the canner on a flat surface. If it doesn't sit evenly, the bottom may be warped— a sign that it was overheated or allowed to boil dry. Warping can weaken the metal and affect safe operation. Also inspect for any visible cracks.

2. **Look for Pitting Inside the Pot.** Pitting—small holes or rough spots inside the metal—can occur when aluminum reacts with minerals in hard water. This corrosion may compromise the strength of the canner under pressure if the pitting is deep.

3. **Replace Key Safety Components.** Even if they appear to be in good condition, it's strongly recommended to replace:
   - The sealing ring (gasket)
   - The overpressure plug

4. **Check Handles**. Inspect handles for damage/cracks.

5. **Evaluate the Pressure Gauge**. If the canner has a dial gauge, it must be tested for accuracy before use. If you want to convert to a weighted gauge and never worry about gauge testing again, consider this 3-piece weighted gauge or conversion kit. If the canner has a tilt dial gauge, we recommend that it is replaced with a current dial gauge for accuracy (tilt gauges can no longer be tested).

6. **Consider Your Stove Compatibility.** Not all canners work well on all heat sources:
   - Smooth-top electric stoves may have weight restrictions—check your manufacturer's guidelines.
   - Ensure your burner can handle the size and weight of a full canner.

7. **Measure for Clearance.** Large canners—especially 23-quart models—can be quite tall. Make sure you have enough vertical space if you have a range hood or microwave above your stove.

8. **Inspect the Rim and Sealing Surface**. Discoloration inside an aluminum canner is normal and not a concern. However, the rim must be smooth and free of dents or deep scratches. Damage here can prevent a proper seal, making it impossible to build or maintain pressure.

9. **Confirm All Parts Are Included.** Check whether the canner comes with the parts listed below. Missing parts will need to be purchased separately, which can quickly add to the cost. If the instruction manual is not included, you can download from our website or purchase a hard copy. Know the approximate price of a new canner, and compare to the cost of the used canner and any parts that need to be replaced. It may or may not be worth the investment.
   - A rack
   - A regulator (weight)
   - A pressure gauge (if the canner requires one)
   - An air vent/cover lock (if the canner requires one)

Final Thoughts. Buying a used pressure canner can be a practical and budget-friendly way to get started with home canning. But it's not something to rush into. A careful inspection and a basic understanding of safety features can make the difference between a great deal and a frustrating—or even unsafe—experience.

QUESTION: **Is it safe to can fruits without sugar?**
ANSWER: Yes, the sugar in syrup does not preserve the fruit, but it does improve flavor, help stabilize color, and retain the shape of the fruit. Fruit which has been canned without sugar will often turn brown when exposed to air just as fresh fruit does.

QUESTION: **Why is my stovetop canner making a whistling or squealing sound while heating up?**
ANSWER: The air vent/cover lock may be loose.

Remove the canner from the heat source. If pressurized, allow canner to release pressure naturally. Remove the cover. When the cover is cool enough to handle, check to see if the air vent/cover lock needs to be tightened. If so, tighten with fingers until a point of resistance is met.

Before each use, check the air vent/ cover lock in the canner cover to be sure the two pieces are screwed together securely. If loose, tighten with fingers until a point of resistance is met.

QUESTION: **When canning meat, why is it necessary to remove as much fat as possible before canning?**
ANSWER: During processing, any fat that gets on the rim of the canning jar can prevent an airtight seal. Leaving excess fat on meat makes it easier for the fat to climb the sides of the jar and contaminate the seal.

We want to thank you for your interest and enthusiasm in this newsletter. Our mailing list continues to grow! The questions asked are excellent, and we encourage you to continue asking. Send your questions to Barb Milkert at bmilkert@gopresto.com so we can address them in a future issue.

How to Contact Presto and Valuable Resources

PRESTO TEST KITCHEN – BARB MILKERT
715-839-2029 or bmilkert@gopresto.com

MASTER GAUGE/GAUGE TESTER INFORMATION – SHELLY
800-877-0441 or contact1@gopresto.com

PRESTO CUSTOMER SERVICE
800-877-0441 or contact@gopresto.com

WEBSITE: www.gopresto.com
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/groups/prestodigitalcanner

FACS RESOURCES: www.gopresto.com/content/support/facs-resources (includes previous issues of this newsletter as well as a link to sign up to receive this newsletter)

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Knife Sharpeners

At first glance, a sharp knife might seem like a small detail in the canning process—but it plays a quiet role in both food safety and your own safety. When your knife is sharp, it's easier to cut fruits and vegetables into evenly sized pieces with clean, controlled strokes, rather than forcing a dull blade through and risking a slip. That consistency matters more than you might think. Heat doesn't move through a jar randomly; it travels at a predictable rate based on the size and density of what's packed inside. Large or uneven chunks can slow that process, creating pockets that heat more slowly than others. A sharp knife won't guarantee perfectly processed food, but it helps you stay within the conditions that tested canning guidelines rely on—consistent size, steady heating, and fewer surprises where it counts most.

Presto has 2 different models available:

https://www.gopresto.com/uploads/SS_08800.pdf

https://www.gopresto.com/product/presto-professional-eversharp-three-stage-electric-knife-sharpener-08810

Presto has created a few videos on the knife sharpeners:
https://www.gopresto.com/videos/presto-eversharp-electric-knife-sharpener
https://www.gopresto.com/videos/presto-professional-eversharp-electric-knife-sharpener
https://www.gopresto.com/videos/how-to-sharpen-a-serrated-knife-with-the-presto-3-stage-electric-knife-sharpener

Fall Garden Relish Recipe

This is a "Fall" recipe, but if you happened to make it last fall, by now it has had time to mellow and should be absolutely delicious. Give it a try on a brat – think you'll be pleasantly surprised!

Recipe from NCHFP and SETP book

- 1 quart chopped cabbage (about 1 small head)
- 3 cups chopped cauliflower (about 1 medium head)
- 2 cups chopped green tomatoes (about 4 medium)
- 2 cups chopped onions
- 2 cups chopped sweet green peppers (about 4 medium)
- 1 cup chopped sweet red peppers (about 2 medium)
- 3¾ cups vinegar (5%)
- 3 tablespoons canning salt
- 2¾ cups sugar
- 3 teaspoons celery seed
- 3 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1½ teaspoons turmeric

Yield: About 4 pint jars

Please read Using Boiling Water Canners before beginning. If this is your first time canning, it is recommended that you read Principles of Home Canning.

Procedure: Combine washed chopped vegetables; sprinkle with the 3 tablespoons salt. Let stand 4 to 6 hours in the refrigerator. Drain well. Combine vinegar, sugar and spices; simmer 10 minutes. Add vegetables; simmer another 10 minutes. Bring to a boil.

Pack boiling hot relish into hot jars, leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel; adjust two-piece metal canning lids. Process in a **Boiling Water Canner**.

Table 1. Recommended process time for **Fall Garden Relish** in a boiling-water canner.

		Process Time at Elevations of		
Style of Pack	**Jar Size**	**0 - 1,000 ft**	**1,001 - 6,000 ft**	**Above 6,000 ft**
Hot	Pints	10 min	15 min	20 min

REMINDER

Gauge Testers - if you haven't already, please send your master gauges or complete testing units in for an annual inspection to ensure you are ready to test your client's canner gauges! Instructions_v23-5871b.pdf