



# Food Safety & Nutrition

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## Canning Seafood Safely

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The catch is in and there are too many fish to fry and eat immediately. Canning is a popular method of preserving seafood. It is important, however, to pack and process seafood as directed to guarantee its safety when you open it to eat it.

Use top-quality fresh seafood. Preserve it as soon as possible after you catch or buy it. The longer you wait, the poorer the quality will be. To prevent spoilage, keep fish and shellfish cold, on ice or in your refrigerator.

Raw seafood may contain microorganisms that cause food poisoning, so be careful when handling it. These bacteria are destroyed by heating the seafood before eating. After handling the seafood be sure to wash your hands, utensils and work surfaces well.

### Canning Seafood

To preserve salmon, trout, steelhead or other fish (except tuna) remove the viscera as soon as it is caught and chill until ready to preserve. Wash and clean the fish thoroughly removing all blood, head, tail and fins. Split the fish lengthwise and into lengths that will fit in a half pint or pint size jar. About 1 pound of fish will fill one half-pint jar. Pack the fish tightly into clean canning jars. If you wish add 1-3 tablespoons vegetable oil or French-type dressing per pint for flavor. Some people will be sure to put skin side out so that when removing the fish from the jar the skin will stick to the jar and remove easily.

After placing fish pieces into the jar, clean the rim well. Use a moistened paper towel to wipe the rim. If you are preserving a fatty fish like tuna or salmon, dip the paper towel in vinegar. This will help to remove the fat residue from the edge of the jar.

Place hot two piece lids on the jar and process for 100 minutes at 11 pounds pressure (dial gauge) or 10 pounds pressure (weighted gauge).

### Canning Smoked Seafood

Once fish is smoked it has a very short shelf live. Even under refrigeration, the bacteria in smoked fish can cause botulism food poisoning and could start to grow after 2-3 weeks of refrigeration.

Placing smoked fish in vacuumed sealed bags does not ensure its safety outside or inside the refrigerator either. If you smoke fish and vacuum seal it, be sure to freeze it if you plan to keep it more than 2 weeks.

Canning is another option. Fully smoked fish that is dry enough to eat will be on the dry side, dark in color and have a strong smoked flavor after canning. For best quality, fish that will be canned should be smoked for a shorter time than for product that will be eaten right away.

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For smoked seafood that is going to be canned, lightly smoked the fish. Smoke only the amount of fish that you will be able to can in that day. Smoke the fish for up to 2 hours, depending on the level of smoke flavor desired. Because this level of smoking doesn't fully cook the fish, do not taste the seafood for doneness. The best way to judge doneness is to measure weight loss. Weight loss is determined by weighing the product before and after smoking. A 10% weight loss provides a good product for canning. A 20-30 percent weight loss would tend to be too dry after canning.

To ensure safe and top quality canned smoked fish can it immediately after smoking is completed. Do not eat this product before canning. Some bacteria survive short smoking process. They will, however be destroyed during canning. If canning must be delayed for more than 1 day, freeze the fish and thaw completely before canning.

When ready to can the smoked fish, pack into pint jars. Half pint jars can be safely used, but the product quality may be less acceptable and the jars will float in the canner. Pack smoked fish vertically into jars leaving 1-inch head space between the fish and the top of the jar. Clean the rim of the jar with a damp paper towel and put on two piece lids. Pressure can the jars for 110 minutes at 11 pounds pressure (dial gauge) or 10 pounds pressure (weighted gauge canner).

Before using the product, check for signs of spoilage such as discoloration, an unnatural odor or unsealed lids or spurting liquid when the jar is opened.

For more specific instructions on canning seafood, smoking seafood and canning other kinds of seafood contact the WSU Extension office. Ask for publications titled "Canning Seafood" or "Home Canning Smoked Fish". There will be a small charge for each of the publications.

Call WSU Extension for more information 360-397-6060

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