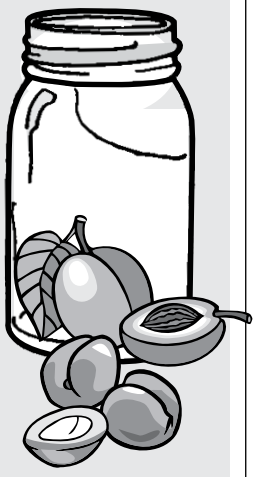
Let's Preserve

Peaches, Apricots, Nectarines



Recommended Varieties

Glenglo, Ernie's Choice, Cresthaven, John Boy, Loring, Redhaven, and Sunhigh. Elberta is less acceptable. All are yellow free-stone peaches. Most apricot and nectarine varieties are suitable for canned and frozen products.

Quantity

A bushel of nectarines or peaches weighs 48 pounds and yields 16 to 24 quarts. An average of 17½ pounds makes a 7-quart canner load; 11 pounds makes 9 pints. A bushel of apricots weighs 50 pounds and yields 20 to 25 quarts. An average of 16 pounds makes a 7-quart canner load; 10 pounds makes 9 pints. An average of 1¼ pounds makes 1 pint of frozen product.

Quality

Choose ripe, mature fruit of a quality suitable for eating fresh. Canned hot packs are better than raw packs. Nectarines make poor-quality preserved products.

Preparation

Dip peaches (optional for apricots) in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds or until skins loosen. Wash nectarines; do not dip in hot water or remove skins. Wash apricots if skins are not removed. Dip quickly in cold water and slip off skins. Cut in half, remove pits, and slice if desired. To prevent darkening, keep peeled fruit in water with vitamin C made by mixing 1 teaspoon of ascorbic acid crystals or six 500-milligram vitamin C tablets in 1 gallon of water.

Floating Fruit

To avoid floating fruit, start with firm, ripe fruit. Heat fruit before packing and use a light to medium syrup. Pack fruit as closely as possible without crushing. Follow directions for processing times.

FREEZING PROCEDURE

Don't freeze more than 2 pounds of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. These fruits may be packed with syrup or dry sugar.

TO MAKE A SYRUP PACK

Mix and dissolve 2½ cups of sugar and ½ teaspoon of ascorbic acid or three 500-milligram vitamin C tablets in 4 cups of water. Add 1 cup of this syrup to each quart of prepared fruit.

TO MAKE A DRY PACK

Mix ½ cup of dry sugar per quart of prepared fruit. To retard darkening, sprinkle ¼ teaspoon ascorbic acid dissolved in 3 tablespoons cold water over each quart of fruit before adding sugar.

TO PACKAGE

Fill pint- or quart-size freezer bags to 3 to 4 inches from their tops, squeeze out air, seal, and label. Before freezing, bags may be inserted into reusable rigid plastic freezer containers for added protection against punctures and leakage. If using rigid containers, allow ½-inch headspace for dry pack and 1-inch headspace for syrup pack fruit in quarts.

CANNING PROCEDURE

Wash jars. Prepare lids according to manufacturer's instructions. Fruits in jars may be covered with your choice of water, apple or white grape juice, or, more commonly, with a very light, light, or medium syrup. To make a very light syrup for a canner load of quarts, mix 1¼ cups of sugar in 10½ cups of water and heat to dissolve; mix and dissolve 2¼ cups of sugar

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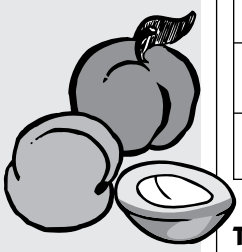

Table 1. Recommended process times in a boiling water canner at designated altitudes.

		PROCESS TIME AT ALTITUDE OF			
STYLE OF PACK	JAR SIZE	0–1,000 FT (MIN)	1,001–3,000 FT (MIN)	3,001–6,000 FT (MIN)	ABOVE 6,000 FT (MIN)
Hot	Pint	20	25	30	35
	Quart	25	30	35	40
Raw	Pint	25	30	35	40
	Quart	30	35	40	45

Table 2. Recommended process times in a pressure canner at designated altitudes.

			CANNER GAUGE PRESSURE AT ALTITUDES OF					
			DIAL GAUGE CANNER				WEIGHTED GAUGE CANNER	
STYLE OF PACK	JAR SIZE	PROCESS TIME (MIN)	0–2,000 FT (LBS)	2,001–4,000 FT (LBS)	4,001–6,000 FT (LBS)	6,001–8,000 FT (LBS)	0–1,000 FT (LBS)	ABOVE 1,000 FT (LBS)
Raw or hot	Pint or quart	10	6	7	8	9	5	10

in 9 cups of water to make a light syrup; mix 3¾ cups of sugar in 8¼ cups of water to make a medium syrup.

TO MAKE A HOT PACK

Place drained fruit in boiling syrup, juice, or water and bring to a boil. Fill clean jars with hot fruit and cooking liquid. To make a raw pack, fill jars with raw fruit, cut side down, and add hot water, juice, or syrup. Leave ½-inch headspace and wipe sealing edge of jars with a clean, damp paper towel. Add lids and tighten screw bands. You may process jars in a boiling water or pressure canner.

TO PROCESS IN A BOILING WATER CANNER

Preheat canner filled halfway with water to 180˚F for hot packs or 140˚F for raw packs. Load sealed jars onto the canner rack and lower with handles, or load one jar at a time with a jar lifter onto rack in canner. Add water, if needed, to 1 inch above jars and cover. When water boils vigorously, lower heat to maintain a gentle boil and process for recommended time. After processing is complete, set canner off heat and remove canner lid. Wait 5 minutes before removing jars. Continue as in next column.

TO PROCESS IN A PRESSURE CANNER

Place jar rack, 2 inches of water, and sealed jars in canner. Fasten lid and heat canner on high setting. After steam exhausts for 10 minutes, add weighted gauge or close petcock to pressurize the canner. Start timing the process when the desired pressure is reached.

Regulate heat to maintain a uniform pressure. When processing is complete, remove canner from heat. Air-cool canner until it is fully depressurized. Then slowly remove weighted gauge or open petcock, wait 10 more minutes, and unfasten and carefully remove canner lid.

Remove jars from canner with a jar lifter and place on a towel or rack. Do not retighten screw bands. Air-cool jars for 12 to 24 hours. Remove screw bands and check lid seals. If the center of the lid is indented, the jar is sealed. Wash, dry, label, and store jar in a clean, cool, dark place. If lid is unsealed, examine and replace jar if defective, use new lid, and reprocess as before. Wash screw bands and store separately. Fruits are best if consumed within a year and are safe as long as the lids remain vacuum sealed.

For additional information about food preservation, visit the Penn State Food Safety Web site at foodsafety.cas.psu.edu and select the Home Food Preservation Web site, or contact Penn State Cooperative Extension in your county.

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