

Dilly Beans

adapted from *Food in Jars* (www.foodinjars.com)

2 pounds green beans, trimmed to fit your jars
1/4 to 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
4 tablespoons dill weed
4 cloves garlic
2 1/2 cups white vinegar (5%)
2 1/2 cups water
1/4 cup pickling salt (use a bit more if you've only got kosher)
4 pint jars with lids and bands

1. Prepare your canning supplies, including pot for canning bath. Bring to a boil to sterilize jars while you prepare the rest of your ingredients.
2. Wash and trim your beans so that they fit in your jar. If you have particularly long beans, your best bet is to cut them in half, although by doing so, you do lose the visual appeal of having all the beans standing at attention.
3. Combine vinegar, water and salt in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat and simmer, covered, while you pack jars.
4. While vinegar bath is heating up, pack your beans into the jars, leaving 1/2 inch headspace.
5. To each jar, add a pinch to 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, 1 clove of garlic and 1 tablespoon dill weed.
6. Pour the boiling brine over the beans, making sure to leave that 1/2 inch headspace. Use a plastic knife to remove air bubbles from jar by running it around the interior of the jar. Wipe the rims and apply the lids and rings.
7. Process for 5 minutes in a boiling water bath.

Note: These beans want to hang out for at least two weeks before eating, to thoroughly develop their flavor!

All-Purpose Brine for Pickling

Adapted from 'Canning and Preserving' by Ashley English

3 cups white vinegar
1 cup water
½ cup sugar
2 tablespoons pickling salt
2 teaspoons prepared horseradish
¼ cup peppercorns
½ teaspoon celery seed
1 bunch fresh dill or tarragon
4 to 8 garlic cloves, peeled
1 teaspoon Cayenne pepper or red pepper flakes (optional)
4 pint jars

1. Prepare your canning supplies, including pot for canning bath. Bring to a boil to sterilize jars while you prepare the rest of your ingredients.
2. Wash and chop your produce. Hard vegetables such as cauliflower, squash, carrots and cherry peppers can be more tightly packed in to jars if softened beforehand. To soften vegetables, pour boiling water over vegetables and allow to soften for 5 to 10 minutes, then rinse in very cold water.
3. Combine vinegar, water and salt in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and hold at a simmer, cover, while you pack your jars.
4. To each jar, add the following: ½ teaspoon horseradish, 6 peppercorns, 1/8 teaspoon celery seed, a spring (or more) of dill or tarragon, 1 or 2 garlic cloves, a pinch of cayenne pepper (optional), and a pinch of crushed red pepper (optional). Alternatively, you can use 4 tablespoons of pre-mixed pickling spice.
5. Pack vegetables tightly in to the jars, and add hot pickling liquid, making sure to leave that 1/2 inch headspace. Use a plastic knife to remove air bubbles from jar by running it around the interior of the jar. Wipe the rims and apply the lids and rings.
6. Process for 10 minutes in a boiling water bath.

Note: When pickling cucumbers, be certain to remove the blossom ends of the vegetable!

Basics of Boiling Water Canning

Step 1: prepare the Food. Follow the recipe! Use the type of pectin specified in recipe. When selecting new recipes to try, be certain the recipes are appropriate for long-term storage (i.e. not refrigerator jam) and boiling water canning (as opposed to a pressure canner). Doubling or tripling recipes can affect the set of jams and jellies.

Step 2: Prepare the Jars. While preparing the food to be canned, heat water in the canner. Position the rack in the bottom of the canner. Check jars for nicks, cracks, and rough edges. Sterilize jars at a minimum temperature of 180oF for a minimum of 5 minutes. Note that if you are doing a hot pack, you will need to sterilize the lids and rings in hot 180oF (not boiling) water. Exposing the lids to extremely hot temperatures will cause the compound in the lids to break down.

Step 3: Fill the Jars. Pack the jars as tightly as you can with the food without crushing it. Top with any hot liquid as specified in the recipe. Remove air bubbles by inserting a spatula down along the sides of the jar. Measure headspace, adding or removing food as needed. Wipe rims and threads of jar to remove residue that may interfere with seal.

Step 4: Put on Lid. Set lids on jar and screw on ring no more than fingertip-tight, just tight enough that you could turn the band another ½ to ¼ inch. This is important for a proper seal.

Step 5: Process the Jars. Work quickly to ensure that jars and food do not lose temperature. Lower jars in to canner. Jars need to be covered with 1 to 2 inches of water. Start processing time from the moment the water starts to boil after the jars are added. Keep at a low, roiling boil. Use process times specified in recipe. Processing too short a time means jars may not seal properly; too long a time will overcook food.

Step 6: Cool the Jars. Remove jars from canner and set on a wire rack or towel on the countertop (cold, bare countertops can crack jars). Do not tighten bands. Allow 12 to 24 hours to cool. After that time, test seal by firmly pressing on the center of the lid. It should not give. If properly sealed, store jars in a cool, dry place for up to one year. If it makes a popping sound, it is not properly sealed. You can, in theory, reprocess the jars again to try to get a proper seal, however it is safer to store the jars in the refrigerator and consume the food within 2-3 weeks. If you give away food in jars with an improper seal, be sure to communicate this clearly to the recipient!

Adapted from 'You Can Better'; Better Homes and Gardens, Wiley and Sons, 2010

Online Home Canning Resources

Food in jars: excellent home canning blog with lots of creative recipes. The author, Marisa McClellan, has also just published a cookbook called 'Food in Jars'

<http://www.foodinjars.com/>

Fresh Preserving: commercial website from the makers of Ball and Kerr jars. Some good recipes can be found here, as well as a complete product line of Ball products.

<http://www.freshpreserving.com>

National Center for Home Food Preservation: an online self-study course in food preservation from the University of Georgia.

<http://nchfp.uga.edu/>

Pick Your Own: search around the website for all kinds of information about fruit, pectin, and the process of canning (not to mention how to locate pick-your-own-farms).

<http://pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm>

UAF Cooperative Extension: in the 'Food, Nutrition, and health' section, you'll find all kinds of free online publications and recipes.

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/pubs/catalog/>

USDA complete Guide to Home Canning, 2009 revision: everything you ever wanted to know about home canning.

http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html