

CANNING VENISON

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Deer and other wild game provide wholesome, nourishing food. These meats can be pressure canned for future use but should be handled carefully to guarantee safety and retain quality. Wild meat is highly perishable, so care is needed to maintain its quality. Following proper preservation methods will allow you to safely use and maintain the best quality of meat throughout the year. Canning produces a final product that is shelf stable and can be stored without refrigeration or freezing for up to one year. When canning venison, the following information will help you understand the importance of safe handling and provide instructions for the canning process.

In the Field

Producing canned venison of high quality begins in the field. When the animal is dead, intestines, lungs, liver and heart should be removed as soon as possible. The carcass should be kept clean by getting it off the ground as quickly as possible and by using clean utensils during dressing. The carcass should be cooled quickly and kept cool during processing and transport. Warm temperatures are meat's worst enemy. The carcass surface contains bacteria that will spoil the meat unless their growth is slowed by chilling. During warm hunting seasons special care should be taken to keep the carcass cool. It should be kept in the shade and allowed as much air circulation as possible. Recommendations on cooling, transporting, aging and cutting carcasses are provided in [HGIC 3516, *Safe Handling of Wild Game Meats*](#).

Venison MUST be Pressure Canned

Meats, poultry and seafood are low acid foods (pH above 4.6) that provide a good environment for the growth of *Clostridium botulinum*, the bacterial cause of botulism. These foods **must** be pressure canned for safety

Canning Venison

Fresh venison should be canned immediately or refrigerated or frozen. Venison refrigerated in moisture-proof plastic wrap or in clean plastic storage bags should be canned within 2 or 3 days.

Wild meat is highly perishable, so care is needed to maintain its quality. In the kitchen, raw meat and cooked meat should be kept separate to prevent cross-contamination. Knives, hands and cutting boards should be washed often with warm, soapy water. Fat and inedible parts should be trimmed from the carcass.

When preparing for canning choose high-quality, chilled venison. If frozen, thaw completely in the refrigerator, under cold running water or in the microwave. Remove sinew and excess fat. Soak strong-flavored wild meats for 1 hour in brine water containing 1 tablespoon of salt per quart. Rinse venison. Remove large bones. Cut into 1-inch wide strips, cubes or chunks.

- Hot pack – Precook meat until rare by roasting, stewing, or browning in a small amount of fat. Add ½ teaspoon of salt per pint or 1 teaspoon of salt per quart to the jar, if desired. Pack hot meat loosely into hot jars leaving 1-inch headspace. Fill jars with boiling broth, meat drippings, water, or tomato juice,

(especially for wild game) to 1 inch from top of jar. Remove bubbles, wipe jar rims, adjust lids and process in pressure canner.

- Raw pack – Add 1 teaspoon of salt per pint or 2 teaspoons of salt per quart to the jar, if desired. Fill jars with raw meat pieces, leaving 1-inch headspace. Do not add liquid. Wipe jar rims, adjust lids and process in pressure canner.

Process jars in a dial-gauge pressure canner at 11 pounds pressure at altitudes of 0 to 2,000 ft or at 12 pounds pressure at altitudes of 2,001 to 4,000 ft. Process jars in a weighted gauge pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure at altitudes of 0 to 1,000 ft or at 15 pounds pressure at altitudes above 1,000 ft. For hot and raw pack jars, process pints for 75 minutes and quarts for 90 minutes.

These procedures apply to the selection, preparation and canning process for other red meats (bear, beef, lamb, pork, sausage, veal) as well. Just remember that spoilage and disease-causing microorganisms thrive on venison and other meats. Following the four “C’s” (clean, chill, don’t cross contaminate, and pressure can properly) is critical to producing safe, high-quality, canned meats. If you are new to canning, see [HGIC 3040 Canning Foods at Home](#) for a step by step description of the process for pressure canning.

If this document didn’t answer your questions, please contact HGIC at hgic@clemson.edu or 1-888-656-9988.

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