



Preserving Foods: *Peppers*

SP 50-454, Revised May 2009

There are many varieties of peppers grown in Oregon ranging from the sweet bell pepper to the pungency of many varieties of chili peppers. A general rule is the smaller the chili pepper pod, the higher degree of pungency and hotter the pepper.

Peppers may be canned, pickled, frozen or dried. When canning and pickling peppers, it is important to follow the directions very carefully in order to assure a safe product. Peppers are low in acid and when preserved improperly can cause botulism.

When working with hot peppers, it is a good idea to wear rubber gloves. The volatile oils found in some varieties can cause burns. Be careful not to touch eyes with unwashed hands.

Peeling Chili Peppers

Peppers can be peeled by roasting in a hot oven 400°-450°F. for 6-8 minutes until the skin blisters. Dip in ice water to cool and then remove skin, stems, seeds and membrane. It is a good idea to pierce the skin before roasting to let the steam out.

Canning Peppers

Peppers are low in acid so must be processed in a pressure canner at 240°F. (10 pounds pressure with a weighted gauge; 11 pounds with a dial gauge). Ask your county Extension office for pressure adjustments if you live above 1,000 feet.

Chili Peppers - Select unblemished, unbruised and freshly picked peppers. Wash carefully. Peel peppers following one of the methods outlined above. Remove stems and seeds. Pack prepared peppers loosely in pint or ½ pint jars leaving 1 inch headspace; pour boiling water over peppers. Add salt if desired, (½ teaspoon per pint). Adjust lids and process pints and half pints 35 minutes at 240°F.

Sweet Bell Peppers - Wash and drain peppers. Remove stem and seeds. Boil peppers 3 minutes; drain. Pack hot peppers into hot jars leaving 1 inch headspace. Add ½ teaspoon salt per pint, if desired. Fill jar with boiling water leaving 1 inch headspace and adjust lids. Process half pints and pints 35 minutes at 240°F.

For added margin of safety, boil all home-canned vegetables for at least 10 minutes before tasting.

Pickling Peppers

Because peppers are low in acid, the proportion of vinegar to water is critical. Use only tested approved pickling recipes that have at least as much vinegar as water.

Small peppers may be pickled whole, but must be prepared in one of the following ways to increase the penetration of vinegar solution into the peppers.

- Blanch whole peppers in water or steam for 3-5 minutes.
- Prick individual peppers with a fork or slash with a knife.
- Blister and peel using one of the methods outlined earlier.

All pickled products should be processed in a boiling water canner to assure a product that will not spoil. Ask your county Extension office for time adjustments if you live above 1,000 feet.

Pickled Hot Peppers

4 pounds hot long red, green or yellow peppers
(Hungarian, banana, green or yellow)
3 pounds sweet red and green peppers, mixed
5 cups vinegar (5% acidity)
1 cup water
4 teaspoon canning or pickling salt
2 Tablespoon sugar
2 cloves garlic

Caution: Wear gloves when handling hot peppers.

Wash peppers. Quarter large peppers. If small peppers are left whole, slash 2-4 slits in each. Peel peppers as outlined on page 1. Flatten small peppers. Fill jars with peppers, leaving ½ inch headspace. Combine other ingredients, heat to boiling, and simmer 10 minutes. Remove garlic. Pour hot solution over peppers, leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process half pints and pints for 10 minutes in boiling water canner.

Yield: 9 pints

Freezing Peppers

Peppers lose their crispness when frozen and thawed. Frozen peppers are useful in cooked dishes where texture is not important, but the flavor is desired.

Sweet Peppers - Select crisp, firm, green or red peppers. Wash, cut out stems and remove seeds. Freeze whole, halved or diced. Peppers need not be blanched; however, whole and halved peppers take up less room if blanched for 3 minutes. Cool. Package.

Drying Peppers

Peppers can easily be dried at home. No pretreatment is necessary.

Hot Peppers - For whole peppers, wipe clean with a damp cloth. Spread a thin layer on trays or string together with needle and cord. Dry until pods are shriveled, dark, red, and crisp. Remove seeds and stems before using. Peppers can also be dried in ¼ to ½ inch pieces. Dry until crisp. Grind and use as a seasoning.

Sweet Peppers - Wash, remove core and seeds. Cut in ¼ inch disks or slices. Spread on drying trays and dry. Peppers will be tough to brittle when done.

Store dried peppers in moisture/vapor-resistant packaging in a cool, dry, dark place. Peppers fade quickly when exposed to light.

Jalapeño Pepper Jelly

To Prepare Juice

2-3 cups ground green peppers (sweet)

¼ to ½ cups ground jalapeño peppers

2 cups water

1 ½ cups vinegar

Wash peppers, remove stems and seeds, and grind. For hotter jelly, use more jalapeño peppers and do not remove seeds.

Put water, vinegar and peppers into a 3 quart kettle. Bring to a boil and simmer 15-30 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching.

Strain cooked pepper mixture. Add a little extra water if necessary to make 3 cups pepper juice.

To Make Jelly

3 cups strained pepper juice

1¾ oz. package dry pectin

4 cups sugar

2-4 drops green food coloring (optional)

Measure sugar into a bowl and set aside. In a 6-8 quart kettle, measure juice, add pectin and stir well. Place over high heat. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Add sugar, mixing well. Bring to a full rolling boil and boil 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Skim off foam. Pour into sterile, hot half-pint jars. Adjust lids and process 5 minutes in a boiling water canner. Yields: Five, 8 oz. jars.

For additional information on preserving peppers, contact your local county Extension office.

Source: Family Food Education Program