

VACUUM PACKAGING MACHINES

Position Statement

Vacuum packaging machines (vacuum sealers) are promoted as a way to vacuum pack foods at home. These vacuum packaging machines may extend the storage time of refrigerated foods, dried foods, and frozen foods. **HOWEVER, VACUUM PACKING MACHINES OR VACUUM SEALERS ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE HEAT PROCESSING OF HOME CANNED FOODS.**

Perishable foods which are packed in a vacuum must be refrigerated or frozen and cannot be safely stored at room temperature. The removal of most of the oxygen does not inhibit all growth of bacteria. Some bacteria which grow in a low-oxygen environment can cause spoilage of foods. A few bacteria which can grow in a low-oxygen, low-acid environment cause serious illness or death in humans.

Home canning processing times are determined by research studies for each food to assure that all bacteria which can grow in the low-oxygen environment are killed by heat. Perishable foods which are vacuum sealed by a vacuum packaging machine have not received the heat treatment necessary to kill all bacteria which cause spoilage or illness. Thus, these vacuum sealed foods cannot be safely stored at room temperature and must be refrigerated or frozen to prevent bacterial growth.

There is no advantage to combining the use of the vacuum packaging machine with boiling water or pressure canning of foods. Jars of food which are processed in a boiling water canner or in a pressure canner develop sufficient vacuum for safe, stable storage at room temperature. An additional vacuum sealing process is not useful.

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