

Judging Canned Meats, Poultry and Seafood

Headspace for meats and seafood should be 1 inch. For poultry and rabbit, the headspace is 1¼ inches. Seafood is to be canned in half-pint or pint jars only. All of the general characteristics for container, pack, appearance of contents and attractiveness should be met.

Meat, poultry, fish and game that are of good quality may be canned. Trim the meat of any gristle or bruised spots before canning. When judging canned meat, check the depth of the layer of fat on the top of the jar contents. A small amount is expected and acceptable. No more than 1/4 of the liquid in the jar should be fat. Meat should have been trimmed of excess fat, so a deep layer of fat at the top of the jar means that not enough attention was paid to trimming the meat before canning. Excess fat can interfere with seal formation, as the melted fat can climb the sides of the jar during processing. If the fat comes in contact with the lid, it may prevent the formation of a good seal. Earlier methods of preserving meat that involved packing meat in solid fat are no longer acceptable.

Desirable General Characteristics for Meats, Poultry and Seafood

Size and Shape	Uniform pieces of same to similar size and shape. Ground meat (including sausage) may be in patties, small balls, or crumbles and sausage may also be cased in 3- to 4-inch lengths (or cut into links of this length). Fish may be cut into vertical lengths to fit jar height.
Pack	Attractive, neat; space well used. Good proportion of solids to liquids. Meat is not to be floured or deep fried.
Texture	Excess fat and gristle removed.
Color	Should be characteristic of cooked meat and seafood. Raw packed meat chunks and strips may retain a pinkish color. (This is a physiological/chemical situation and is acceptable.) Hot packed meats and their brine or juices should not be pink. Bloody meat or juice is not acceptable.
Liquid	Meat may or may not be completely covered by liquid. Liquid may be slightly jellied except for fish and shellfish. No more than ¼ of the liquid in the jar of meats should be fat; ½ inch or less preferred. Minimal sediment is preferable. Raw pack meat will have more sediment than a pre-cooked hot pack. Fish and smoked fish do not have added liquid, except tuna which may be packed in water or oil. Clams may be covered with clam juice or water.

Desirable General Characteristics for Meats, Poultry and Seafood

Container Properly labeled. Appropriate size for available recommended canning processes. Clean, clear standard canning jar. No cracks, chips, or rust on jar. Recommended lid with good vacuum seal. Band free of rust and dents or other damage; clean and easily removed.

Judging Criteria for Individual Meats, Poultry, Fish, and Game

Poultry and Rabbit	May be canned with or without bones and with or without skin. Pieces should be neatly cut at joints where possible, not ragged or crushed. Free from sharp bone edges. Skin is clean and free from feathers/pin feathers or fur. Poultry giblets should be canned separately and not mixed in jars with meat. Liquid in hot packs should be cooking broth; raw packs have no added liquid.
Bear, Beef, Lamb, Pork, and Venison	Meat may be canned in strips, cubes, or chunks. Large bones must be removed; removal of all bones is preferred. Meat broth, water, or tomato juice are acceptable canning liquids. Fat in meat packed in tomato juice will be tomato-red. Other fat should be free of discoloration. Pieces should be firm, free of gristle and excess fat. Meat cut across the grain into uniform, serving-size pieces is preferred. Meat should be moist with the shape well-preserved. Liquid may be jellied and/or may not completely cover the meat, especially in raw packs where the liquid may only half cover the meat.
Ground Meat and Sausage	Only hot pack canning is recommended. Ground meat should be browned before canning. It may be in patties, small balls, or crumbles. Sausage may also be in cased links.
Finfish and Shellfish	Finfish is usually split lengthwise and fillets cut to fit jar height; pieces are packed vertically. Bones removed from large fish; backbone may be left in small fish. Fish and smoked fish do not have added liquid, except tuna which may be packed in water or oil. Clams may be covered with clam juice or water. Seafood cannot be canned in jars larger than pints.



Pressure Canning Summary Sheet for Judges USDA Recommendations*

MEAT & SEAFOOD

	Headspace	Style of Pack	Jar Size	Process Time (minutes)	Pressure (psig) at Altitudes of					
					Weighted Gauge		Dial Gauge			
					0 - 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft	0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	4,001 - 6,000 ft	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Chicken or Rabbit – Without Bones	1 ¼ inch	Hot & Raw	Pint	75	10	15	11	12	13	14
				90	10	15	11	12	13	14
Chicken or Rabbit – With Bones	1¼ inch	Hot & Raw	Pint	65	10	15	11	12	13	14
				75	10	15	11	12	13	14
Ground or Chopped Meat	1 inch	Hot	Pint	75	10	15	11	12	13	14
				90	10	15	11	12	13	14
Strips, Cubes, or Chunks of Meat	1 inch	Hot & Raw	Pint	75	10	15	11	12	13	14
				90	10	15	11	12	13	14
Meat Stock (Broth)	1 inch	Hot	Pint	20	10	15	11	12	13	14
				25	10	15	11	12	13	14
Chili Con Carne	1 inch	Hot	Pint	75	10	15	11	12	13	14

******* There are NO recommended boiling water processes for the meat, poultry, seafood or meat products in this table *******

* Source: *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, US Department of Agriculture. Revised 1994. www.homefoodpreservation.com

Developed by The University of Georgia, Athens, for the National Center for Home Food Preservation. Released by Elizabeth L. Address, Ph.D., Department of Foods and Nutrition, College of Family and Consumer Sciences. August 2003.

MEAT & SEAFOOD

	Headspace	Style of Pack	Jar Size	Process Time (minutes)	Pressure (psig) at Altitudes of					
					Weighted Gauge		Dial Gauge			
					0 - 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft	0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	4,001 - 6,000 ft	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Festive Mincemeat Pie Filling	1 inch	Hot	Quart	90	10	15	11	12	13	14

There are no recommended process times for jars larger than pints for the seafood products below.

Clams – Minced or Whole	1 inch	Hot	Half Pint	60	10	15	11	12	13	14
		Hot	Pint	70	10	15	11	12	13	14
King and Dungeness Crab Meat	1 inch	Cooked per directions	Half Pint	70	10	15	11	12	13	14
			Pint	80	10	15	11	12	13	14
Fish	1 inch	Raw	Pint	100	10	15	11	12	13	14
Oysters	1 inch	Cooked per directions	Half Pint	75	10	15	11	12	13	14
			Pint	75	10	15	11	12	13	14
Smoked Fish	1 inch	Cooked per directions	Pint	110	10	15	11	12	13	14
Tuna	1 inch	Cooked per directions	Half Pint	100	10	15	11	12	13	14
			Pint	100	10	15	11	12	13	14

******* There are NO recommended boiling water processes for the meat, poultry, seafood or meat products in this table *******

* Source: *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, US Department of Agriculture. Revised 1994. www.homefoodpreservation.com

Developed by The University of Georgia, Athens, for the National Center for Home Food Preservation. Released by Elizabeth L. Address, Ph.D., Department of Foods and Nutrition, College of Family and Consumer Sciences. August 2003.

Canned Meats, Poultry and Seafood

Characteristic	Points	
Pack Acceptable processing method (pressure for altitude) used; correct preparation procedures followed; correct type of pack (hot, raw) for processes available.	40	
Jar filled to appropriate headspace.		
Meat may or may not be covered by liquid; the more liquid the better. Fish and smoked fish except tuna do not have added liquid.		
Good use of space in jar; full but not crowded pack.		
Meat strips and pieces of fish packed vertically in jars.		
Meat is not to be floured or deep fried.		
Quality of Product Uniform pieces of same to similar size and shape.	30	
Color characteristic of cooked meat and seafood. Raw packed meat chunks and strips may retain a pinkish color. Hot packed meats and their brine or juices should not be pink.		
Free from fat and gristle in meat pieces.		
Free from discoloration, blemishes, bruises.		
Quality of Liquid Free from unnatural cloudiness or bubbling.	20	
Liquid may be slightly jellied except for fish and shellfish.		
Minimal fat layered on top of meats.		
Meat may be packed in water, meat broth or tomato juice. Fish and smoked fish do not have added liquid, except tuna which may be packed in water or oil. Clams may be covered with clam juice or water.		
Free from any or excessive sediment or non-edible particles; raw pack meat will have more sediment than a pre-cooked pack.		
Free from large amounts of trapped air.		
Container Vacuum-sealed.	10	
Clean, clear glass standard canning jar.		
Appropriate size jar for product and available processes.		
New lid and band free of rust; screwband clean, unbent and easily removed.		
Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, date processed, processing method and time.		
Comments		