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## How to Make Homemade Canned Pickled Beets



You think making and canning your own pickled beets is difficult or expensive? Not at all! You can do it with basic equipment already in your kitchen - you just need a canning pot. And thanks to the vinegar in pickled beets, you can use either a plain open water bath pot or a pressure canner (which will also let you can low acid vegetables!)

So, here's how to can pickled beets! The directions are complete with instructions in easy steps and completely illustrated. In the winter when you open a jar, the pickled beets will taste MUCH better than any store-bought canned pickled beets!

Prepared this way, the jars have a shelf life of about 12 months, and aside from storing in a cool, dark place, require no special attention

## Ingredients and Equipment

- 7 to 8 lbs of Beets (see step 1)
- 4 cups vinegar (5% acidity)
- 1½ teaspoons canning or pickling salt
- 2 cups sugar or Splenda
- 2 cups water
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 12 whole cloves - about 1 tsp
- 12 allspice nuts (whole) - about 1 tsp
- 4 to 6 onions (approximately 2 to 2½-inch in diameter) (optional)
- Jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at Wal-Mart)
- At least 1 large pot
- Large spoons and ladles
- Ball jars (Publix, Wal-Mart carry them - about \$7 per dozen pint jars including the lids and rings)
- 1 [Water Bath Canner](#) OR a pressure Canner (a large pressure pot with a lifting rack to sterilize the jars after filling about \$75 to \$200 at mall kitchen stores, Wal-Mart, cheaper online; [see this page for more about pressure canners](#)).

## Recipe and Directions



### Step 1 - Selecting the beets

The most important step! You need beets that are FRESH and crisp. Limp, old beets will make nasty tasting canned beets. Guests will probably throw them at you.. Select firm, crisp beets. Remove and discard any soft, diseased, spotted and chewed up beets.

### How many beets and where to get them

You can grow your own, pick your own, or buy them at the grocery store. About 7 pounds of 2- to 2½-inch diameter beets makes about 8 pints of pickled beets. I wouldn't use canned beets; what's the point: Most of the flavor is gone from them, and you can always get fresh beets.

### Step 2 - Prepare the jars and canner

#### Wash the jars and lids



This is a good time to get the jars ready! The dishwasher is fine for the jars; especially if it has a "sterilize" cycle. Otherwise put the jars in boiling water for 10 minutes. I just put the lids in a small pot of almost boiling water for 5 minutes, and use the magnetic "lid lifter wand" (available from WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores) to pull them out.

#### Get the canner heating up



Rinse out your canner, put the rack in the bottom, and fill it with hot tap water. (Of course, follow the instruction that came with the canner, if they are different). Put it on the stove over low heat just to get it heating up for later on.

### Step 3 - Trim the ends and cut into smaller pieces



Just take a sharp knife and trim off beet tops, leaving an inch of stem and roots to prevent bleeding of color.

### Step 4 - Wash the beets!

I'm sure you can figure out how to scrub the beets in plain cold or lukewarm water using your hands or a vegetable brush.

### Step 5 - Cook the beets

Put similar sized beets (hopefully, they're ALL of a similar size so they take the same time to cook) together with enough boiling water to cover them and cook until tender (usually about 30 to 45 minutes in an open pot, or 10 - 15 minutes in a pressure cooker). Drain and discard the liquid (it would weaken the pickling solution).



### Step 6 - Cool the beets

You can pour ice over them, or just let them cool on their own. It's just to cool them enough so you can handle them to remove the skins, stems, roots and then slice or quarter them.



### Step 7 - Trim, peel and slice

Trim off the roots and stems. The skins should easily slide off. Slice the beets into  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices. You can leave the beets whole (if they are small, say 1 inch or less), or quarter them or slice them into  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch slices. This is to help more fit in the jars and to help the seasoning to penetrate them better.



### Step 8 - (Optional) Slice the onions.

If you like onions in the mix (most people do), peel and thinly slice the onions.

### Step 9 - Make the Pickling Solution



Combine the vinegar, salt, sugar (or Splenda if you need a no-sugar version) and fresh water in a large pot. Put the spices in cheesecloth bag and add to vinegar mixture. Bring to a boil.



Here's a great trick for the spices: get a baby food holder like this one, available at Target and any baby supplies store. It is made of plastic, and can hold the spices for easy removal later. It's reusable and has no metal, so it won't react with the vinegar!

### Step 10 - Heat the mixture with the beets and onions

Add beets and onions to the pot and simmer for 5 minutes. Then remove the spice bag.



### Step 11 - Packing the beets in the canning jars



This is called "hot packing"! Fill the jars with beets and onions, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace. Pack the jars fairly tightly, but be sure to leave  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch of space at the TOP of the jar. That is called "headspace" and is needed for expansion during heating in the water bath.

### Step 12 - Pour boiling cooking liquid into each packed jar

Use a ladle or pyrex measuring cup to carefully fill each packed jar with the hot vinegar solution, again allowing  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace. The beets should be covered and there should still be 1/2 inch of airspace left in the top of each

jar. Be careful not to burn yourself, (or anyone else - children should be kept back during this step!)

### Step 13 - Put the lids and rings on

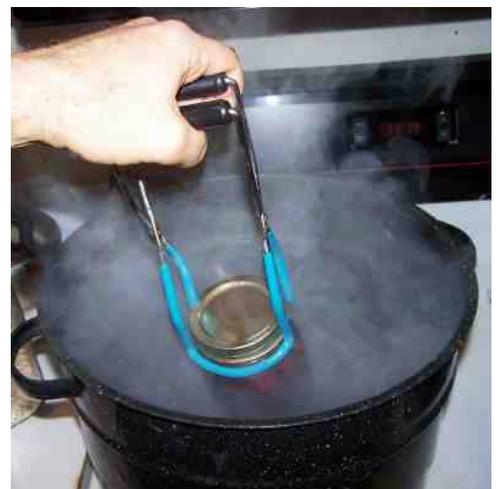
Put the lids on each jar and seal them by putting a ring on and screwing it down snugly (but not with all your might, just "snug").

### Step 14 - Put the jars in the canner and the lid on the canner

Using the jar tongs, put the jars on the rack in the canner. Make sure the tops of the jars are covered by at least 1 inch of water.

### Step 15 - Process for 30 minutes\*

The chart below will help you determine the right processing time and pressure, if you have a different type of canner, or are above sea level. **For most**



people, using a plain open water bath canner, the time will be 30 to 35 minutes. You can use either a plain water bath canner OR a pressure canner, since the vinegar adds so much acidity (if you can vegetables other than tomatoes without adding vinegar, you must use a pressure canner).

<b>*Recommended Processing times For Pickled Beets in A Boiling Water (Open) Bath Canner</b>						
			PROCESS TIMES (MIN) AT ALTITUDES OF:			
Canned Product	Style of Pack	Jar Size	0-1000 ft.	1001-3000 ft.	3001-6000 ft.	Above 6000 ft.
Pickled Beets	Hot	Pints or Quarts	30	35	40	45

Recommended process time for beets in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

		Canner Pressure (PSI) at Various Altitudes for Dial-Type Pressure Canners			
Jar Size	Process Time	0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	4,001 - 6,000 ft	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Pints	30 min	11 lb	12 lb	13 lb	14 lb
Quarts	35	11	12	13	14

## Step 16 - Remove the jars



Lift the jars out of the water and let them cool on a wooden cutting board or a towel, without touching or bumping them in a draft-free place (usually takes overnight), here they won't be bumped. You can then remove the rings if you like. Once the jars are cool, you can check that they are sealed verifying that the lid has been sucked down. Just press in the center, gently, with your finger. If it it pops up and down (often making a popping sound), it is not sealed. If you put the jar in the refrigerator right away, you can still use it. Some people replace the lid and reprocess the jar, the that's a bit iffy. If you heat the contents back up, re-jar them (with a new lid) and the full time in the canner, it's usually ok. You're done!