

Canning Chicken in a Pressure Cooker – Raw Pack

The Sisters Cafe

Ingredients:

- Fresh (not frozen) boneless chicken breasts. 7 quarts will require about 25-30 pounds of chicken. 20 pints will require more (my guess is 35-40 pounds.)
- Salt. Canning or pickling salt is recommended because table salt contains a non-caking filler which may cause cloudiness in the bottom of the jar. (However, we use table salt anyway.)
- Chicken bouillon granules. (The dry kind; not 'Better than Bouillon' varieties)

Equipment:

- 23-Quart liquid capacity pressure canner. It has 7 quart capacity or 20 pint capacity (if you have two racks -one for the bottom of the canner and one between layers of pint jars. Otherwise it can hold 18 pints stagger stacked).
- 18-20 pint-sized glass jars or 7 quart-sized glass jars, brand new lids, and bands (the bands don't have to be new).

Directions:

1. Prepare chicken: Remove any excess fat from the fresh chicken breasts, then cut in large chunks (4 or 5 pieces per breast). Set aside in the refrigerator until you are ready to fill the jars.
2. Warm up the canning jars by running them through a dishwasher cycle (heated dry turned on) without any detergent. Leave door closed until ready to fill jars.
3. Heat 3 quarts of water. You will be pouring this into the canner. (You don't want to boil it, but it just needs to be hot. For raw packed foods (like as in this instance), the water should only be brought to 140 degrees F.)
4. Wash lids with soap and water and set aside. Preheating lids is NOT necessary. However, if you want to, cover lids with water in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer (180 degrees F) over medium heat for 10 minutes. Keep lids hot until ready to use. To prevent seal failure, do NOT boil lids.
5. Using your warmed up pint-sized jars, pour ½ tsp salt and scant ½ tsp chicken bouillon granules into the bottom of each jar. If using quart-sized jars, use 1 tsp salt and a scant 1 tsp chicken bouillon granules.
6. Loosely fill jars with chicken chunks, leaving 1 ¼ -inch headspace for expansion during processing. Do not add any water or broth. The meat will form its own liquid as it cooks in the canner. (FYI, in case you are wondering, this picture does not show 1 ¼ -inch headspace. So leave more headspace than shown.)
7. Wipe the rim of the jar with a clean, damp paper towel to remove any bits of chicken or grease that may interfere with the seal. Center a lid on the jar. Apply band and adjust until fit is fingertip tight.

8. Pour 3 quarts of boiling water into the canner, up to the 3 quart water line marked on the inside (in my canner, this is the lowest line marked near the bottom; your instruction manual will confirm if this is the case for your canner). Always add water before setting jars in the canner. Set the rack inside and evenly place jars on the rack. The jars may touch. If you have an extra rack to place between the layers of the pint jars, you may set 10 pint jars on the bottom, put the rack on them, then stagger stack 10 more jars on the top layer. If you do not have an extra rack, you may only be able to stagger stack 9 jars on the top layer. (Stagger stack means you place one jar on top of two.)
9. Cover. Do not place the pressure regulator on the vent pipe yet. Turn heat on high.
10. When steam begins flowing steadily out of the vent pipe (for me, it usually heats for about 15 minutes before this occurs), put timer on for 10 minutes. Maintain a moderate steam flow. This procedure is called "exhausting".
11. After the 10 minutes are up, put the pressure regulator on the vent pipe, increase the heat to high, and wait for the pressure to reach 11 pounds pressure (if you are below 2,000 feet altitude). (Plan on 5-10 minutes to reach pressure.) (Process at 12 lbs for 2,001-4,000 feet altitude, and 13 lbs for 4,001-6,000 feet.)
12. Once your pressure has been achieved, put the timer on for 75 minutes if using pints and 90 minutes if using quarts. Adjust your heat so that the correct pressure is maintained. To do so, you will need to keep checking it.
13. When the time is up, turn off heat. Wait for the pressure to drop. Pressure is completed reduced when the air vent/ cover lock has dropped and no steam escapes when the pressure regulator is tilted. This may take 45 minutes or longer. (Leave the pressure regulator on the vent pipe during this time.)
14. When pressure has been completely reduced (and the air vent/cover lock has dropped), remove pressure regulator from vent pipe and let canner cool for 10 minutes.
15. Take the jars out of the canner and set on a towel to cool. (FYI, the liquid in the jars will not reach up to the top. If you notice some chicken juice residue on the outside of your bottles, that's okay. Sometimes they can leak if they have been packed too tightly, but it doesn't wreck the seal.) Do not disturb the cans as they cool. After the recommended 12 hours, you may wipe the jars off, test the seals, remove bands, date the lids with a permanent marker, and store in a cool, dry place. (If any of the lids have not sealed, you will want to place the jar in the fridge for immediate use or reprocess it, before the 12 hour cooling period of course. To know if it is not sealed before the 12 hour mark, look at the lid closely to see if it has flattened or turned concave on the top. If it has, it is sealed. If it is convex, it may not have sealed and I would store it in the fridge until you can manually test it by pressing the center of the lid and seeing if it flexes up and down when pressed.)