

Canning Chiles

1. The processing method required for canning foods is determined by the pH of the specific food.
2. The only way to safely can chiles and other non-acid foods is by **pressure processing**.
3. You must use **tested recipes** and the recommended methods for each type of food. Processing methods are not interchangeable.
4. Current home preserving books, such as **The Ball Blue Book** and **So Easy To Preserve**, are available through local CSU Extension offices.
5. Fact sheets are also available through local CSU Extension offices or on-line at www.ext.colostate.edu or <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/pubs.html>

Colorado State University Extension Programs are available to all without discrimination.

Developed 1/07 by El Paso County Extension Master Food Safety Advisor volunteers.
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Sources: New Mexico State University, Cooperative Extension Service, College of Agriculture and Home Economics publication Guide E-324, Nancy C. Flores, Extension Food Technology Specialist; and "Ball Blue Book," 2005, Altrista Consumer Products Company.

Processing Chile Peppers



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Introduction: It's chile time! Chile peppers add unique flavors to foods and can be used in almost any dish, including salads, entrees, or even desserts! Whether you prefer mild or hot, you can select and process chiles to add an element of creativity to your meals. Chiles add nutrition as they are a good source of Vitamins A and C, and fiber.

Selection: Choose chile peppers that are mature, heavy for their size, smooth, fresh and crisp. Avoid peppers that have soft spots or bruises with mold or decay.

Anatomy of a chile: The chile consists of an outer skin that is usually removed in processing, the fleshy part of the fruit, an inner wall, ribs and seeds. The inner membrane and ribs of the chile where the seeds are attached contain capsaicin glands. Removing the inner ribs will reduce the 'heat' of the chile.

Cautions: Wear gloves and glasses to protect your skin and eyes from possible contact with the capsaicin oil that produces the heat found in chiles. To remove capsaicin from your skin, rub the affected area with olive or vegetable oil, wipe off with a paper towel, and then wash thoroughly with plenty of soap and water and dry with a paper towel. This is especially important before engaging in other activities where your hands may touch your skin.

If you wear contact lenses, you may want to remove them before processing hot chiles.

Blistering: There are several ways to blister pepper skin for easy removal. Fire-roasting, steam injection, microwave heating or any other source of high heat applied directly to the surface of the pepper will cause the skin to blister. Roasting slowly over a flame creates caramelization of sugars, which adds distinct flavor to the final product.

Peeling: Peeling the skins is eased by placing the roasted peppers in a microwave safe or heat tolerant covered container or plastic bag (food grade) that will allow steam to release from the roasted peppers. Once cooled, the blistered skin will pull off the chile flesh with a gentle tug and an occasional rinse with water. Whole peppers can be frozen unpeeled and are easier to peel after freezing.

Packaging: For safety and quality, roasted peppers should be **completely cooled in an ice bath or refrigerator to less than 40°F. within 2 hours following exposure to heat, and must be used or frozen within 3 days of storage in the refrigerator.** Pack unpeeled chiles in plastic bags, heavy aluminum foil or freezer wrap; press down to remove air; seal. Peeled chiles, whole or diced, can be packaged in plastic bags or rigid containers of glass, metal or plastic. Leave $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of head space. Label and date.

Safety Concern: Commercial roasters are a convenient and economical way to handle large volumes of chile peppers. Make sure the roasted chiles are placed in a food grade plastic bag (not a trash bag), or other food-safe container. Promptly transport chiles home in a chilled ice chest. Divide into small batches for quick cooling.

If roasted peppers are not chilled and frozen in a timely manner, bacteria can grow and become dormant during freezer storage. Once the peppers thaw, the bacteria can revive and cause a foodborne illness.



Freezing & Storage: Freeze chiles to 0 degrees F. or below immediately after packing. Put no more food into the home freezer than will freeze within 24 hours (2 to 3 lbs of food for each cubic foot of freezer space). Leave a little space between packages for proper air circulation. For best quality use peppers within 1 year.