

Bacon Heaven–Detailed Bacon Canning Tips and Tricks

By Kellene Bishop



Bacon, *bacon*, B-A-C-O-N! There are some foodies who consider bacon to be the Food of the God's. While Paula Deen has her well-known belief of "you can never have enough butter" (and I do SO agree), there are many bacon fans out there that would rather have to listen to a Milli Vanilli Greatest Hits Marathon than do without their bacon. I think we'd encourage a lot more people to carry firearms if we were ever able to convince bacon lovers that zombies might take their precious salted pork someday. "Zombies after my bacon?! Now them's fightin' words!"



NOTHING else tastes like bacon any better than **BACON**.

It just can't be replicated with a pill, hypnosis, and definitely not TVP! I suspect that this is why groceries chains are claiming that the amount of bacon sales has not reduced in spite of a 15.6 percent increase from December of last year to the end of January 2012. \$4.65 a pound! Ouch! And with the prices of fuel, corn, as well as so many other things that influence the price of this scrumptious pork product, we're not likely to see it go under \$4.00 a pound again any time soon. (see: [Bureau of Labor Statistics – Average Retail Foods Prices](#)). I suppose that makes sense when you consider that bacon slides its way into every meal of the day, and if you've ever tried the chocolate covered bacon, it will definitely sizzle its way into your snack time of day. But after seeing 9 oz can of

canned bacon sell for \$17.99 one day, I knew that I had to find an alternative to feed the salty hunger cravings AND I had to stick with my criteria of getting it at an [affordable price](#) and stocking up without having to worry about freezer space.



I always say that if the store can do it, then so can I. And after having such great success in canning nearly every other meat imaginable, I certainly didn't want to miss out on a successful home canning method. So I studied and played and experimented—a lot—because I found a lot of reports of failed attempts as well as some less than fabulous attempts. I also saw a lot of people doing it the hard way—or worse, the expensive way.



There are a lot of various complaints regarding home-canned bacon. And, if you know foodies, you know that anything other than “Wow! That tastes great!” just won't do! Issues such as the canned bacon crumbling when cooked, tasting odd, time consuming, hard to get out of the jar afterwards, waste of good meat fat, etc., etc. were just a few of the concerns I wanted to address. So here you go; here's my best pork leg forward.

Satisfy your family's craving for bacon by making your own Home-canned bacon! It's the best!



First of all, how you can your bacon is determined by what you want it ultimately to look like when you serve it. If you just want bacon in order to flavor beans, quiches, scrambled eggs, or something in which you don't need full-crispy strips, then all you have to do is can bacon the way you do any other meat. Stuff it in the jar raw up to the screw rings, wipe off the rim, place a clean flat lid on top, then the jar ring on top, and then process it for 75 minutes at 10 pounds of pressure for pint jars (which are my preferred sizes for such recipes) and 90 minutes for quart jars at the same pressure—though high elevation may require 15 pounds of pressure. When in doubt, read your manufacturer's directions. This method will cook your bacon thoroughly and will enable it to easily last on your cool, dark shelves for 10 years. Yes, I said 10 years. That grin on your face is perfectly permissible. When you're ready to dig in to this bacon, just pour all of the contents into your beans, or dump the contents into a frying pan and sizzle them up on a medium-high heat. Drain the fat and save it in a covered glass jar for future cooking oil needs. (That's the good kind of fat for the body—much better than any hydrogenated fats.)

Here's a quick bacon hint



You can save a lot of money on buying bacon that you don't need to end up in a particular shape. A lot of meat counters in grocery stores will set aside the bacon bits, ends, and pieces. Sometimes as they are cutting it, the strips are too thick, too thin, too small, or just plain falling apart or in pieces once the good stuff's cut. But for you, this is perfectly wonderful bacon to have on hand for anything that doesn't require crispy strips. Making some phone calls to ANY of your stores or meat manufacturers would be a great way to get your hands on some yummy bacon for much less than the strips.

Now if it's crispy bacon strips along side your waffles or on a tasty bacon, [sprouts](#), and tomato sandwich that you want, well, that's when you pull out the wide-mouth quart jars stuffed with canned bacon. Obviously the goal is to have bacon be [shelf-stable](#) for 10 years AND be able to cook up as sizzling strips. So here's what you will need:

- 1 wide-mouthed quart size mason jar for approximately every pound of bacon you want to can with appropriate [lids](#).



- All the smoked bacon you care to can, (preferably thick cut, but if not, no problem. We've got a fix for that.)
- Metal against Metal pressure canner. ([All-American](#) is my canner of choice, and yes, I can use it on my flat top stove, or my [butane cook stove](#), or even an open fire if need be.)
- Parchment Paper: The single sheets work fine if your bacon is shorter—or you could always cut the bacon to the right length and use the pieces to stuff a bacon scraps jar. But if your bacon is longer, like that which comes from [Zaycon Foods](#), you'll need to use the rolls of parchment paper. You COULD use masking paper instead, which you can get at the hardware store for cheap. But I'm only interested in using food-grade paper. It doesn't matter if the paper is white or brown.
- Scissors for cutting the bacon if necessary and for cutting the parchment paper to

size

- A heavy, flat rock or brick: this is necessary when canning quart jars. The jars have quite a bit of air in them and thus they tend to float when immersed in just enough water to cover their lids. Yup, I actually have a canning rock now that I can bacon. *grin* (You could stack more jars on top and try that, but this just depends on how many your canner will hold.)
- Paper towels: you'll use these to clean off the rims of the jars prior to putting the lids on them.
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup of vinegar



Take a single sheet of parchment paper, (about 12 x 15 inches); the rolled parchment paper will be wider than that, but no problem.

Lay it flat on a clean smooth surface.

Lay 8 strips of thick cut bacon down on the paper parallel with the short side of the paper side by side each other, no overlapping necessary. If you are using non-thick bacon, then place two strips of bacon on top of each other, exactly aligned as much as possible; repeat that 8 times across the paper as you would the single strips of thick bacon. This little trick will help you to have nice strips of bacon rather than bacon that falls apart.

As you're placing the bacon on the sheet, begin to the far left. You'll have a little bit of space left over on the pre-cut sheets but if you're using parchment rolls, then cut your sheets so that you do have about 4 inches excess on the right side.



Once you've filled your sheet of bacon place another sheet of parchment paper on top of the bacon, smoothing it out flat and matching it end to end. I see many people miss this important step, but don't skimp. Do it so that you get the final product that you'll want when you get to open your jar full of this yummy stuff! Other than doubling the bacon to purposely create thicker pieces by double layering, you don't want the bacon rolled on top of itself.

Fold the three layers in half lengthwise, directly in half. If you have paper up at the top that's longer than the bacon, fold the excess paper in, towards you, and smooth the fold.



Now tightly roll your multi-layered stack lengthwise (like a burrito), taking care to keep the loose edge of the parchment paper folded down as you go along. Again, you'll want this to be nice and tight. As you get to the end of your length, the slick bacon may begin to get squeezed out a bit, but it shouldn't be even as much as the width of a strip of bacon.

Now, if you have some bacon exposed on the far end of your roll, then cut a piece of parchment wide and long enough to wrap outside of your roll of bacon to create a smooth exterior, covering bacon that may have slipped out during your rolling.



Now, place the roll with the smooth fold edge facing UP. This is so that you get as much of your bacon fat at the bottom of the jar while it's being pressure canned. The grease is so much easier to use later when you do it this way. You may end up twisting and squeezing just a bit, but I've done this enough times that 8 pieces of bacon should fit perfectly in your wide-mouthed quart jars. If you attempt to do this with regular mouth jars, you'll end up wasting a LOT of space in the jar and it will take you many more to get the job done. **DO NOT ADD WATER** to your jars.

Wipe the rims of your jars with a clean paper towel to ensure there's no residue on it. Place the flat lid on the jar and then place the jar ring on, tightening it gently—only “fingertip tight”—as it's called in the canning world.



Place the metal rack/liner that comes with your pressure canner in the bottom of the pan. (It will help prevent your jars from cracking and breaking during the pressure canning process.) Then place the number of quart jars in the pressure canner that fit and fill the pressure canner with enough water to just barely cover the tops of the jars. (NOTE: this is my own personal preference. You do not need to cover the jars with water. Your manufacturer guidelines will tell you how much water you need for your canner) Add $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of white vinegar to the water. This will prevent the outside of your jars from getting corroded with calcium from the water and makes your jars nice and clean. Cover them with the second metal rack that comes with your pressure canner. Place your rock or brick on top of it to hold the jars in place during the pressure cooking process. This will ensure that the entire jar's contents reach the pressure and heat necessary to be

safely cooked and stored.



Place the lid on the canner and “baton down the hatches”, sealing it up; but do NOT put the round weight on it yet. Bring your burner to high heat and wait until you have a hearty, steady stream of steam coming out of the valve. Allow this steam to continue for 5-10 minutes based on manufacturer’s directions. This is purging the air from your canner. Once the steam is steadily escaping, place your weight, at the 10 pound hole/indicator, on the valve. Now follow your manufacturer’s instructions in terms of how what to be mindful of during the canning process. My instructions state that the weight should only rattle once every 3 to 5 minutes. I adjust the heat downward gradually in order to maintain that. Your stove will vary, but mine usually ends up on the “2” setting or Med-Low, by the time I’ve got the perfect pressure. I’m constantly checking my gauge to make sure that I am maintaining the pressure at or above the 10 pounds.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You do not start counting your minutes of canning time UNTIL your canner has come up to the proper pressure.



Once you’re finished pressure canning turn off the heat, carefully remove the weight from the valve (I use a towel or pot holder), and wait for the pressure to complete drop. (YES! You can do this, unless of course you want to cook your meat a little longer and let it shred to pieces or you want to wait all day for the pressure to drop naturally. A canner is much like a pressure cooker. Quick Release is an acceptable option for pressure release.)

Once the steam has fully escaped, then carefully open your canner with the lid facing away from you as more steam will escape. With a jar lifter, carefully lift the jars out of the canner and rest them on your counter (cover counter appropriately to

prevent burning or melting of the counter material, such as with a dish towel.) Allow the jars to cool completely for 24 hours. Within the first 30 minutes of cooling you will begin to hear the lids popping. This is how you know they are sealing.

After the first 24 hours, gently re-tighten the lid rings to fingertip tight. Wash the exterior of the jars as necessary to remove any fat or other debris. Then keep the jars out for another 24 hours just to be certain that they have all sealed.



You can test for sealing by pressing your finger in the center of the flat lid. If it “pops” up and down as you press it, it isn’t sealed and you’ll need to replace the flat lid, or just eat the bacon sooner, rather than later. Store in a cool, dark place. Your bacon is completely cooked and *could* be consumed directly from the jar.



When it’s time for you to enjoy your crispy bacon strips my best suggestion to give you is to BAKE the bacon on a piece of stoneware at 375 for about 15 or 20 minutes. You can fry them in the skillet, but due to the pre-cooking the bacon’s already endured it’s likely to fall apart a bit for you. However if you used thick bacon strips or double-stacked the two bacon strips, you shouldn’t have this problem. Also, frying them in the skillet at

medium to medium high heat will also ensure your strips turn out beautiful.

One last little tip. Obviously you'll want to save the grease that you're apt to have at the bottom of the jars. But, if you save the parchment paper that you used to can the bacon as well, you've got a little extra tool for the next time you need to grease and flour a pan. Simply take a piece of the parchment and wipe it all over your pan. It's got plenty of grease attached to it to serve this purpose.

And THAT'S how we do it Preparedness Pro style! Enjoy!

Be sure to check out the legendary [Preppers Outreach Contest](#) for a chance to win a StoveTec stove or a FREE Zaycon Sales Event offer to help with your Bacon Canning Fun! Everybody wins at this contest!