

Canning Butter

<http://frontierfreedom.blogspot.com/2010/12/canning-butter.html>

Canning butter isn't a top priority for most people, but it's an annual chore for me. In this article, I'll tell you how I've been canning butter for years. Since we don't have electricity, I have no way to keep butter from going rancid unless I can it. Our summers in this part of Alaska are not usually very hot, but last year we did have a few weeks with highs in the 90's. Although none of the butter I had stored in the cache melted, I was expecting a mess when I opened the tote. I don't know how I survived those steamy summer days growing up in Georgia. It rarely gets above 75 here. I have learned to love our mild Alaska summers.

Last year I did not get around to canning our butter and I regretted not making the time for it. Butter that has been canned does not taste quite the same as fresh butter, and the texture is a little different. I think that is caused by letting the temperature get too high, and maybe keeping it there too long, but I'm not sure. The taste of canned butter certainly isn't as bad as rancid butter, so from now on I'm making it a regular spring chore. The taste is really pretty good. Definitely fine for cooking and on toast.

Now for the disclaimer: Someone at the extension service told me that there is no USDA approved method for home-canning butter. So, if you decide to try this, then you're on your own. As in my post on canning cheese, I can't promise you that it's safe, but I can tell you that I've been canning butter and cheese for years and we've never been sick from it.

Here's how I can butter:

Note: 11 pounds of butter will fill 12 1/2 pint jars (just over 3/4 pound for each jar). Either Wide Mouth or Regular canning jars can be used. I use Regular because the jars, lids and bands are less expensive.

1. Place the butter in a large stainless steel or good enamel pot. Over low heat, slowly melt the butter, stirring occasionally. I leave the lid off.
2. While the butter is melting, sterilize clean pint canning jars in a 250 degree oven for 20 minutes. Sterilize bands and lids according to the package instructions and keep in hot water until ready to use.
3. Continue heating and stirring the butter until it begins to simmer, but don't quite let it come to a boil. Simmer the butter for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Make sure it doesn't scorch. The butter separates as it heats, but then blends again as it is simmered and stirred.
4. Remove the hot jars from oven. Ladle the melted butter into the jars using a canning funnel if you have one. Leave 1/2" to 3/4" headspace. I stir the butter in the pot a little to keep it mixed and to keep it from cooling and sticking to the sides of the pot.
5. When all the jars are filled, clean the rims, place the hot lids and bands on the jars, and hand tighten.
6. After a few minutes, some of the jars will begin to seal (you will hear the pop). You will need to shake the jars every few minutes as the butter solidifies in order to keep it blended. I wait until the jars are cool enough to easily handle and have been sealed at least a few minutes before I begin shaking them. Shake each jar a little every few minutes. When the butter remains more consistent in the jars, you can refrigerate and check every 5 minutes. I don't have a way to refrigerate them, so this step takes a while for me. Continue shaking the jars every 5 minutes until the butter solidifies.

Using the above method, the jars are not processed in a boiling water bath. I have done that before by pouring the butter into the hot jars as soon as it melts (no simmering), and then did a 40 minute boiling water bath. I don't like it as well because it made the butter taste kind of stale and it was very grainy.