



What Can Cause a False Seal?

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A false seal can occur when jar rims are not wiped clean before processing, if a jar is not filled correctly, or if products are not processed correctly. Jars may appear to be sealed, but may come unsealed later. (If a jar does not seal at all, place it in the refrigerator and re-process it within 24 hours.) Wipe jar rims firmly with a damp cloth or paper towel to make sure the rims are clean before applying the lids and rings.

Use a reputable recipe and process your product correctly and for the specified time. Both a boiling water canner and a pressure canner not only heat the product to help ensure a safe result, they also force as much air as possible out of the jar. If products are not processed for the full recommended time, air can be trapped in the jar. If jars are stored in a place that can get warm, the air trapped inside can expand as it heats up, and that air could pop the lid off a jar.

Make sure headspace is correct and fill jars as recommended. If a jar is under-filled, it will take longer to force the air out during processing. All the air may not be removed and a false seal can occur. The recommended headspace is directly related to the recommended processing time. Again, once the air inside the jar heats up on a hot day, the air expands and can pop the lid.

Sometimes when the contents of an unsealed jar cools off it can re-seal. You may never know the seal was broken until you open the jar and it is moldy, or worse, you and your loved ones get sick.

Overfilling your jars can be bad, too, because it can cause siphoning, which is when the product seeps out of the jar between the rim and the lid.

Siphoning sometimes occurs if a jar is over-filled. Sometimes it siphons in the canner, sometimes it siphons when the jar is removed from the canner. Often jars will seal, but there will be product

stuck on the rim of the jar under the lid. This can cause a false seal because the product on the jar rim can mold and push the lid off the jar rim which will eventually break the seal.

Siphoning may occur when pressure canning if the pressure fluctuates. Carefully monitor the canner and make small adjustments to maintain a consistent pressure.

What should you do if your jars siphon? Here are a couple of suggestions:

- Reprocess the product, correcting any mistakes that may have been made.
- Check the lids for a solid seal. If you feel comfortable that the seal is tight, clean your jars thoroughly. Pay special attention to remove food that may be trapped in the threads at the top of the jar. This food will mold if left in place. Check these jars routinely to make sure they stay sealed. Use this product sooner than later. Sometimes a jar can come unsealed months after it was canned.

Use a recipe from a reputable source, such as the National Center for Home Food Preservation, Ball, or cooperative extensions' publications. Always follow recommended processing procedures. Check your canned products routinely to make sure they are all sealed. If you find an unsealed jar, stay safe. Dispose of the contents of unsealed jars; do not eat the product. Clean the jars thoroughly as recommended at

http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/general/identify_handle_spoiled_canned_food.html.

While MFP public classes have ended for the season in El Dorado County, monthly classes continue in Amador and Calaveras counties. Check out their schedule at <http://ucanr.edu/mfpc>. El Dorado County MFP free public classes will resume at the end of June – and be sure to visit us at the El Dorado County Fair in mid-June, as well!

If you are interested in becoming a Master Food Preserver yourself and educating others about safe home food preservation, please complete the online interest form at http://ucanr.edu/be_mfp. El Dorado County MFP training classes begin in March and end in May.

Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506. For more information about the public education classes and activities, go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews/>. Find us on facebook too!