

Peaches, Apricots, Nectarines

Recommended Varieties

Glenglo, Ernie's Choice, Cresthaven, John Boy, Loring, Redhaven, and Sunhigh. Elberta is less acceptable. All are yellow freestone peaches. Most apricot and nectarine varieties are suitable for canned and frozen products. Some varieties of white-flesh peaches are lower in acid than traditional yellow varieties and are not recommended for canning. Freezing is the recommended method for preserving white-flesh peaches.

Quantity

A bushel of nectarines or peaches weighs 48 pounds and yields 16 to 24 quarts. An average of 17½ pounds makes a 7-quart canner load; 11 pounds makes 9 pints. A bushel of apricots weighs 50 pounds and yields 20 to 25 quarts. An average of 16 pounds makes a 7-quart canner load; 10 pounds makes 9 pints. An average of 1¼ pounds makes 1 pint of frozen product.

Quality

Choose ripe, mature fruit of a quality suitable for eating fresh. Canned hot packs are better than raw packs. Nectarines make poor-quality preserved products.

Preparation

Dip peaches (optional for apricots) in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds or until skins loosen. Dip quickly in cold water and slip off skins. Nectarines are not peeled before canning. For freezing, nectarines are washed and peeled without dipping in hot water. When freezing apricots if skins are not removed, heat them in boiling water for ½ minute to keep skins from toughening during freezing. Cut in half, remove pits, and slice, if desired. To prevent darkening, keep peeled fruit in water with vitamin C made by mixing 1 teaspoon of ascorbic acid crystals or six 500-milligram vitamin C tablets in 1 gallon of water. (If using a commercial ascorbic acid mixture, follow directions on product label.)

Freezing Procedure

Don't freeze more than 2 pounds of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. These fruits may be packed with syrup or dry sugar.

To Make a Syrup Pack

Mix and dissolve 2½ cups of sugar and ½ teaspoon of ascorbic acid or three crushed 500-milligram vitamin C tablets in 4 cups of water. Add 1 cup of this syrup to each quart of prepared fruit. Pack into plastic freezer containers or tapered wide-mouth jars.



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Press fruit down and add syrup to cover. Leave ½ inch of headspace for pints and 1 inch of headspace for quarts. Place a small piece of crumpled water-resistant paper or wrapping material on top to hold fruit down. Seal, label, and freeze.

To Make a Dry Sugar Pack

Mix ½ cup of dry sugar per quart of prepared fruit. Stir gently until sugar dissolves or let stand for 15 minutes. To slow darkening, sprinkle ¼ teaspoon of ascorbic acid dissolved in 3 tablespoons of cold water over each quart of fruit before adding sugar. Pack into plastic freezer containers or tapered wide-mouth jars. Allow ½ inch of headspace for pints and 1 inch of headspace for quarts. Seal, label, and freeze.

Canning Procedure

Wash jars. Prepare lids according to manufacturer's instructions. Fruits in jars may be covered with your choice of water, apple or white grape juice, or, more commonly, a very light, light, or medium syrup. To make a very light syrup for a canner load of quarts, mix 1¼ cups of sugar in 10½ cups of water and heat to dissolve; mix and dissolve 2¼ cups of sugar in 9 cups of water to make a light syrup; mix 3¾ cups of sugar in 8¼ cups of water to make a medium syrup. Fill jars with fruit and hot liquid using the hot or raw pack method. Remove air bubbles. Leave ½ inch of headspace and wipe sealing edge of jars with a clean, damp paper towel. Add lids and tighten screw bands. You may process jars in a boiling water, atmospheric steam, or pressure canner.

FLOATING FRUIT: To avoid floating fruit, start with firm, ripe fruit. Heat fruit before packing and use a light to medium syrup. Pack fruit as closely as possible without crushing. Follow directions for processing times.



To Make a Hot Pack

Place drained fruit in boiling syrup, juice, or water and bring to a boil. Fill clean jars with hot fruit and cooking liquid.

To Make a Raw Pack

To make a raw pack, fill jars with raw fruit, cut side down, and add hot water, juice, or syrup.

To Process in a Boiling Water Canner

Preheat canner filled halfway with water to 180°F for hot packs or 140°F for raw packs. Load sealed jars onto the canner rack and lower with handles, or load one jar at a time with a jar lifter onto rack in canner. Add water, if needed, to 1 inch above jars and cover. When water boils vigorously, lower heat to maintain a gentle boil and process for recommended time. After processing is complete, set canner off heat and remove canner lid. Wait 5 minutes before removing jars and placing on a towel or rack. Do not retighten screw bands. Air-cool jars for 12 to 24 hours. Remove screw bands and check lid seals. If the center of the lid is indented, the jar is sealed. Wash, dry, label, and store jar in a clean, cool, dark place. If lid is unsealed, examine and replace jar if defective, use new lid, and reprocess as before. Wash screw bands and store separately. Fruits are best if consumed within a year and are safe as long as the lids remain vacuum sealed.

To Process in an Atmospheric Steam Canner

Preheat the base of a steam canner that has been filled with the amount of water designated in the instruction manual that comes

with the canner (usually about 2 quarts). Set the rack in the base of the canner. Heat water in the base of the canner to 180°F. As each jar is filled, place it on canner rack, keeping the cover or lid on the atmospheric steam canner as you work. When all jars are in the canner, bring the canner to a boil over medium to medium-high heat until a steady column of steam at least 6 inches long escapes from the vent hole(s). Processing time begins when there is a steady column of steam 6 to 8 inches long. Slowly adjust the heat to maintain a steady column of steam throughout the processing time. When processing is complete, remove the canner lid or cover. Allow the jars to sit in the canner for 5 minutes before removing them from the canner with a jar lifter to a towel-covered counter. Do not retighten screw bands. Cool, inspect, label, and store jars as described above in boiling water canner instructions.

To Process in a Pressure Canner

Place jar rack, 2 inches of water, and sealed jars in canner. Fasten lid and heat canner on high setting. After steam exhausts for 10 minutes, add weighted gauge or close petcock to pressurize the canner. Start timing the process when the desired pressure is reached.

Regulate heat to maintain a uniform pressure. When processing is complete, remove canner from heat. Air-cool canner until it is fully depressurized. Then slowly remove weighted gauge or open petcock, wait 10 more minutes, and unfasten and carefully remove canner lid.

Remove jars from canner with a jar lifter and place on a towel or rack. Finish cooling and storing as directed in processing in a boiling water canner above.

► **Table 1.** Recommended process times in a boiling water or atmospheric steam canner at designated altitudes.

		Process time (in minutes) at altitudes of			
Style of pack	Jar size	0–1,000 ft	1,001–3,000 ft	3,001–6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Hot	Pint	20	25	30	35
	Quart	25	30	35	40
Raw	Pint	25	30	35	40
	Quart	30	35	40	45

► **Table 2.** Recommended process times in a pressure canner at designated altitudes.

			Canner gauge pressure (in pounds) at altitudes of					
			Dial gauge canner				Weighted gauge canner	
Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (min)	0–2,000 ft	2,001–4,000 ft	4,001–6,000 ft	6,001–8,000 ft	0–1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Raw or hot	Pint or quart	10	6	7	8	9	5	10

For additional information about food preservation, visit the Penn State Extension Home Food Preservation website at extension.psu.edu/food/preservation or contact Penn State Extension in your county.

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