THE WATER-BATH METHOD

Success depends upon careful attention to the following rules, which are simple enough to be used in any kitchen. The utensils needed are a wash-boiler with a cover or some other covered cooker that is deep enough to allow the water to cover the jars at least an inch and a rack to keep the jars from resting on the bottom of the boiler and to allow the water to circulate under them. Do not use straw or cloths. The rack can be very roughly made of laths or slats of any kind.

To cook one jar at a time use a pail, sufficiently deep to permit the water to come an inch above the top of the jar, and in place of the rack an old tin plate with holes in it.

A bent wire or a long-handed button-hook will be needed to lower the jars into the water and to take them out.
To "Process"

This word will be used in the following recipes because it saves a great deal of repetition. It means to put the jars into a boiler or pail, as described above, and cook the length of time given in the recipe. The boiler or pail must be kept covered and the time must be counted after the water begins to boil all over the jars.

After processing never open the jars; if they are not full it will do no harm if the work has been done according to directions and the jars are air-tight. To test wait until they are perfectly cold and then undo the wire clamps and try to raise the glass tops, if they come off in the hand they are not air-tight and must be done over, refilling and using new rubbers.

Sometimes in processing the rubber gets misplaced or breaks and it is necessary to open the jar to put on a new rubber; half seal the jar as before, put it back directly, and process it at least five minutes.
Preparation and Care of Jars

Jars should be washed clean and fitted with covers and good rubber rings before the work of canning is begun. Just before filling they should be sterilized by dipping and rolling about in water that is boiling, or they may be put in a pan of cold water and be brought to a boil. Avoid touching the inside of the jar after it has been sterilized. Dip the rubbers in hot water before putting them on the jars. Jars should always be kept in a dry place; if they are left where it is damp, the rubbers are likely to become soft so that the jars are not air-tight and the fruit may spoil.

To avoid broken jars observe the following rules:

If the recipe calls for water or syrup, be careful to have it about the same temperature as the fruit and the jar, and see that the water in the boiler is the same. Jars filled with hot or warm water must not stand any length of time before going into the water bath.
Never seal jars tight when putting them into the boiler; half seal by turning up the wire that holds the cover on the jar but do not turn down the spring that closes the jar air-tight. If the jar has a screw top do not screw tight. If the jar should be sealed air-tight when put into the boiler to process, it would be likely to burst when the contents began to get hot and expand. Sometimes the jars are taken out when they have been in half the given time and sealed and then finished; this can be done safely.

When jars are taken from the boiler and sealed air-tight they must not be set on a cold surface or in a draft. A wooden shelf or board is the best place to set them and a towel thrown over them will protect them from a draft. If the jars are new there is no better place to put them than right back into the cases in which they came.

Preparation of Fruit and Vegetables

Never use fruit or vegetables that are over ripe. The water used to fill the jars
must be free from iron or ammonia in order to have good results. All measures given are level.

Vegetables to can should be young and they should be perfectly fresh; if possible put them up the day they are gathered. If stale and wilted vegetables are used they may, when opened, have a disagreeable smell and sour taste although they have apparently kept well.

Apples, pears, and peaches may be dropped into cold water as soon as they are peeled to keep them from turning dark.

Always wash strawberries before hulling and currants and grapes before taking them from the stems, otherwise a great deal of juice is lost and the flavor is impaired. Put the strawberries in a colander and gently souse them up and down in a pan of cold water.

Fruit and vegetables before being put into the jars are either steamed or scalded, as the rule directs, and then are plunged into cold water. This does various things. It is
the first process toward sterilization; it fixes the color in green vegetables; it loosens the skin on peaches and tomatoes, and the cold plunge hardens the pulp and prevents them from becoming mushy.

When the rule calls for steaming, if there is no steamer at hand, use any large covered kettle with a colander that will fit into it. Put enough water into the kettle to give steam, but not enough to reach the vegetables when they are in the colander. Lay the vegetables on a piece of cheesecloth and tie loosely before putting them in the colander, so that they can be more easily handled.