

# Preparing and Canning: Tuna<sup>1</sup>

United States Department of Agriculture, Extension Service<sup>2</sup>

Tuna may be canned either precooked or raw. Precooking removes most of the strong-flavored oils. The strong flavor of dark tuna flesh affects the delicate flavor of white flesh. Many people prefer not to can dark flesh. It may be used as pet food.

**Note:** Glass-like crystals of magnesium ammonium phosphate sometimes form in canned tuna. There is no way for the home canner to prevent these crystals from forming, but they usually dissolve when heated and are safe to eat.

**Procedure:** Keep tuna on ice until ready to can. Remove viscera and wash fish well in cold water. Allow blood to drain from stomach cavity. Place fish belly down on a rack or metal tray in the bottom of a large baking pan. Cut tuna in half crosswise, if necessary. Precook fish by baking at

250° F for 2-1/2 to 4 hours (depending on size) or at 350° F for 1 hour. The fish may also be cooked in a steamer for 2 to 4 hours. If a thermometer is used, cook to a 165 degree to 175 degree F internal temperature. Refrigerate cooked fish overnight to firm the meat. Peel off the skin with a knife, removing blood vessels and any discolored flesh. Cut meat away from bones; cut out and discard all bones, fin bases, and dark flesh. Quarter. Cut quarters crosswise into lengths suitable for half-pint or pint jars. Fill into jars, pressing down gently to make a solid pack. Tuna may be packed in water or oil, whichever is preferred. Add water or oil to jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. Add 1/2 teaspoon of salt per half-pint or 1 teaspoon of salt per pint, if desired.

Adjust lids and process following the recommendations in [Table 1](#) or [Table 2](#) according to the canning method used.

**Table 1. Recommended process time for tuna in a dial-gauge pressure canner.**

		Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of			
Jar Size	Process Time	0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	4,001 - 6,000 ft	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Pints and Half-pints	100 min	11 lb	12 lb	13 lb	14 lb

\*After the canner is completely depressurized, remove the weight from the vent port or open the petcock. Wait 10 minutes; then unfasten the lid and remove it carefully. Lift the lid with the underside away from you so that the steam coming out of the canner does not burn your face.

**Table 2. Recommended process time for tuna in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.**

		Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of	
Jar Size	Process Time	0 - 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Pints and Half-pints	100 min	10 lb	15 lb

\*After the canner is completely depressurized, remove the weight from the vent port or open the petcock. Wait 10 minutes; then unfasten the lid and remove it carefully. Lift the lid with the underside away from you so that the steam coming out of the canner does not burn your face.

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