
Canning Basics: Make Cumin-Scented Pickled Carrots with Karen Solomon

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(bouncy music) - Hi there, food eater, and welcome to Canning 101. I'm your instructor, Karen Solomon. I'm the author of Asian Pickles; Jam It, Pickle It, Cure It; and Can It, Bottle It, Smoke It. And if you like what you see today, I invite you to visit my blog at Ksolomon.com. We are gonna cover a lot of fun stuff in this class. We're going to learn all the basics of canning, including canning safety, what fruits and vegetables are safe for hot water bath processing canning, and also how to properly pack a canning jar, how to prepare your jars and all of your equipment for canning, and at the end, you're going to have a delicious batch of fresh, homemade pickled carrots for you to eat and enjoy. (energetic music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- Now we're gonna talk about all of the tools and materials that we're gonna use for both canning and for making a delicious pickled carrot. Let's start with about 3 3/4 of a pound of carrots. And I want you to cut them into fairly thick sticks. We're gonna talk about how to cut those properly in just a little bit. Over here, we have about 7 1/2 teaspoons of kosher salt, as well as five tablespoons each of black peppercorns and dill seed. Dill seed, by the way, is what makes pickles taste like pickles. You're also gonna need about five teaspoons each of fennel seed, and also cumin seed. And just any kind of household measuring spoon will suffice. You're also gonna need about five cloves of garlic. Garlic is also delicious in pickles. This recipe requires five pint-size canning jars. Just make sure that they are clean and odor-free, and also that you're using new lids and clean bands. Over here, we're also gonna need a chopstick, but any kind of long wand will do. Just something to get the bubbles out of the jar. Here we have a fancy roll of canning labels, which I'm using, but if you want to, you could just use masking tape and a Sharpie. That's totally fine as well. You'll also need a kitchen timer and canning tongs. Canning tongs you can buy at a hardware store, and that's really an essential item for home canning. You also need a dishtowel or two, that helps to just clean up any messes as they occur, and for our recipe to make our brine, we're gonna need about 20 ounces of distilled white vinegar and 20 ounces of cool tap water to make your brine. Now, let's talk about the canning rack. You might be more familiar with canning racks being this big, large, rigid metal thing that goes into the bottom of a pot and keeps your jars from clanking around and touching the direct bottom of the pot. But I am a big fan of this! This is a silicon trivet that, when I'm not using it for canning, it's a beautiful decoration on my kitchen table, and also, you can put a hot pot on it when you're serving. This is actually what you're going to use instead of a traditional canning rack. Oh, in addition to all this stuff, you need just a basic cutting board and a good, sharp knife. Over here on the stove, we have a small pot of boiling water going, just in case you're going to sterilize your lids and your bands. And we also have a very large pot of boiling water. Now, I'm using my stockpot, but you can use anything that you find in your kitchen that is big enough to contain our canning rack, the five pint-sized jars, and to cover the jars with boiling water by at least two inches. The traditional canning pot looks a lot more like this. It's a very thin enamel metal, and oftentimes, particularly if you're buying one of those starter canning kits, it comes with one of these giant canning racks on the inside. You can buy one of these specialty canning pots if you really want to,

but there's no need to buy and store something that you're only gonna use for canning. I say just use the pots that you already have in your kitchen. Now that we have all of our materials together, let's start canning.

Chapter 3 - Prepare for Canning

Hot water canning basics

- Okay, let's talk about the difference between pressure canning and hot water bath canning. Pressure canning requires that you purchase a giant pressure canner, and the other 360 days of the year, when you're not canning, this thing has to live in your kitchen. A pressure canner is absolutely essential if you want to can your own chicken soup, your own stock, your own meat, your own fish, your own potatoes, anything that's not suitable for hot water bath canning. I recommend for home cooks, and for people just starting out with canning, that you stick only to hot water bath canning, which is essentially taking your jar, filling it with the right kind of food at the right acidity, and then boiling it for some period of time, and that's exactly what we're gonna do today. Suitable for hot water bath canning are such things as jams, marmalades, fruit curds, that sort of thing, because those have both the right acidity, and also a very high sugar level, also a preservative. But what we're going to do today is a very tried and true hot water bath foodstuff, which is pickles. That acidic brine that we're going to make to pour over our carrots, is what's going to keep the carrots in a safe acidic zone, and make them suitable for hot water bath canning. Now, don't like carrots? No problem. If you'd like, you can substitute those with a number of vegetables, including cucumbers, daikon radish, cauliflower, red peppers, green beans, any, any other, almost any other vegetable that you like can be substituted as long as you're gonna use the same brine that we're making today. The only thing that is not safe for you to use are potatoes and also mushrooms. Don't use either of those for home canning of any kind. There's two different ways to treat your vegetables when you're doing hot water bath canning. There's hot packing, which means you scald the vegetables before they go into the canning jar, and then there's cold packing, which means you start with room temperature vegetables. I really prefer cold packing, because I like a really crisp and firm pickle, and if you scald them, that means that they're cooked for extra long, and that means that your vegetables are more likely to be soft and mushy. Now, of course there's some gray area in home hot water bath canning, and that's usually in mixed relishes and chutneys and salsas, but for things like that for your own home canning, I would say find a tried and true recipe from a trusted recipe developer, and just make those. Then, you'll be completely fine. That said, let's talk about the very real danger of foodborne botulism. Now, I know that for new canners this is often a really big deal. You're very concerned that you're gonna get very very sick off of your pickles, but please let me dispel that myth for you once and for all. Yes, of course there is a small risk, and it's a terrible disease, but the risk of it is so infinitesimally minuscule, you really don't have to worry. Driving in your car or walking down the street are probably more dangerous than eating a pickle that you've made yourself. There's only a handful of foodborne botulism cases in the United States every year, and in the last studies that I found, none of them were fatal, so I think that you can can with confidence.

Preparing jars and lids

- Let's get to know your canning jars. First, we have the little four-ounce cuties. Then, we have the half-pint jar. These two, I really like for things that have a more viscous consistency, like a fruit curd or a jam. Then I'm showing you two different kinds of pint jars. This is the regular pint jar. And this is

a wide-mouth pint jar. The wide-mouth jar just refers to a larger opening at the top of the jar. And both of these are exactly the same size. But sometimes I really like that wider opening for doing large things, like big hunks of beet or big onions or something, but today, we're actually gonna use the regular pint-size canning jar for our carrots. I find that the curve of the shoulders of the jar actually helps the carrots to stand up straight. Over here, this one is our quart jar, and this is really helpful if you're doing a big bulk of food, or also if you're doing, if you want to can large pieces of food, such as big, green tomatoes or big cucumbers, this is a really great jar to use for that. Now, every canning jar has three parts. The jar itself, which can be reused several times, the band, which can also be reused, and then the lid. Now, the lid has to be new for every canning project. There's a small wax seal right around the outside. A fresh ring of wax is essential for your canning jar to properly seal. You also have to make sure that your jar is completely free of cracks of any kind around the edge. So just take your finger and rub it around the edge before use, to make sure that it's clean and crack-free. The jars and the bands can be reused. However, the lids have to be replaced every time. After you use the lids that came with your brand-new set of canning jars, you can go out and buy a box of new lids. These are the ones you wanna use for your second, and every other subsequent batch of pickles or jams or whatever it is you're making. Once you've tested your jars, and you know that they are clean and free of cracks in any way, you want to boil them in a very rapid boil. Very rapid boil for 10 minutes to sterilize them completely. After 10 minutes, just turn off the heat, leave on the lid, and let them sit until we're ready to fill them with our pickling ingredients. In this second pot, we actually put in the lids to both soften the wax a little bit, and also to sterilize them. Now, between you and I, I have to tell you, I always sterilize my jars, because I feel like that's really important, and all of the food is actually going to go inside the jar. But, personally, I feel like if I'm using new lids that have never been touched by anyone, and if I'm using clean enough bands that aren't ever going to touch the food, I personally don't usually sterilize those, myself. So I leave it up to you how you wish to proceed. Canning tongs are really the essential tool for this job. Make sure you're using the rounded part of your canning tongs to grip your jar, because that's gonna give you a really firm grip. And note that there's enough water in the pot to cover all of the canning jars by at least two inches.

Preparing ingredients and filling jars

- We're going to make our brine, and this really could not be any easier. We're going to mix together two ingredients, distilled white vinegar and cool, fresh tap water. And now we're gonna bring this to a boil. While we're waiting for that to boil, we're gonna finish cutting up our carrots. Now, all of these have already been peeled, and we're gonna trim them. And then, we want to trim them into thick sticks that aren't any taller than the shoulders of the jar. We're gonna lop off a little bit from the top, check the height and make sure it's okay, and then, for a carrot about this size, I cut it in half the long ways and then I cut it in quarters lengthwise. But, if it's a really wide carrot, maybe you would wanna cut that into thirds. And then just put those aside. After you cut the carrot once, make sure that the flat side of the carrot is down on the board, because it's gonna be a lot easier to chop. Now, almost four pounds of carrots is an awful lot to chop up, so if they start to dry out, just put them into a bowl full of water to keep them fresh. Once all the carrots are cut, now we're ready to pack our jars. Let's get our jars out of the pot. You're gonna use your tongs. And my goodness, be careful, 'cause of course, these are really hot. Drain the water. And then set them on a clean towel. This is definitely the tried-and-true method for sterilizing your jars. However, you do have a couple of other options. Some people like to sterilize their jars in the dishwasher on the

hottest cycle, and other people sterilize their jars by baking them on a tray in a 350 oven for one hour. Those are a little controversial, so for me, this is the method that I always use. Let's move the jars over to our workspace. And, pro tip, always put your spices at the bottom of the jar. There's nothing worse than filling your jar with your carrots or your cucumbers, or whatever you're using and then trying to fight to get the spices on top. There they are, our five little soldiers. Alright, into the bottom of each jar, we are going to put a lightly crushed clove of garlic. There we go. And then, with our measuring spoons, we're gonna put in about a teaspoon and a half of kosher salt. I really love kosher salt. This is my preferred salt, not just for pickling, but pretty much for cooking of any kind. It has a really nice, clean flavor, and its salt crystals are the right size to dissolve really easily in a brine. They do sell specialty pickling salt, but you don't really need it. We're gonna add a tablespoon of black peppercorns. Nice whole ones. Not only do these look beautiful in a jar, but they just add that nice peppery flavor. And, in addition to that, we're gonna add a tablespoon of dill seed to each jar as well. Now, don't confuse dill seed with dill weed. It's a different spice. Yes it's from the same plant, but dill weed has a very different flavor. And, following that, we're going to add a teaspoon of cumin seed, not ground cumin, but cumin seed. And again, this just looks better in the jar, and if you use seeds, they'll fall to the bottom of the jar, whereas if you use ground spices, you're gonna get that grittiness of the spice in your pickle bite, and nobody likes a gritty pickle. Oh that smells so good. Okay, and last, we are going to add one teaspoon of fennel seed. That's all of our spices and aromatics. Now we're ready to pack the carrots into the jars. So, take one jar, and get as many carrots in the jar as possible. So you wanna tilt the jar on its side and really try to occupy as much space in the jar as possible. You wanna get as much pickle bang for your buck as you possibly can. So, if you're scaling the recipe at all, I find that it usually takes about 12 ounces, about 3/4 of a pound of carrots to fill one pint jar, and that's about 20 to 25 of these little sticks. And really shove 'em in there. The reason I always start new canner out with carrots is because I really want to show you that you have to pack the jar as tightly as possible, and carrots, as opposed to cucumbers, can really take the abuse of getting into a canning jar. (grunts) Don't be afraid to be forceful. I pronounce this packed. You can pack all five jars in exactly the same way.

Chapter 4 - Processing the Jars

Make brine and fill jars

- Now, to pour the brine over the carrots, we are gonna use our canning funnel. A canning funnel is very much just like a regular funnel, except it has a much wider hole at the bottom, which, coincidentally, fits directly into the neck of the canning jar. Our brine is hot and steamy, the funnel's in place. We're gonna go ahead and add the brine to each of the pickle jars. Usually I fill them up about three quarters of the way, and then top them off once they're all almost full. The funnel is really great because it keeps the brine from splattering on the rim of the jar. It's very important to keep the rim of the jar clean so that you get a really good tight seal. You have to make sure that the vegetables are covered completely. As you're pouring your brine, keep in mind that you need to leave about a quarter to a 1/2 inch of headspace at the top of the jar. Headspace is just really a term for an air pocket, so just means you need to leave about, mmm, that much space or so at the top of the jar where there's no vegetables and there's no brine. Okay, these all look pretty good, except for that one. So, if you find that you accidentally put in too much brine, your friend the turkey baster is here to help. The next thing that we need to do is take a clean, wet towel. I like to take just the tip of a clean dish towel and dip it into my boiling water, and just wipe the rims of the jars to make sure that we didn't accidentally spill any brine onto the rims of the jars. So just take this, give it a quick

dip in the hot water, cover this up to keep the heat, and then just wipe the rim. It's very, very important that the rim and everything that comes in contact with it is very clean, and that's gonna make sure you get a good, tight seal. It's pretty much okay if you spill brine somewhere else, because, you know, canning's not fun if it's not messy. So, it's very important to look at the outside of the jar. Hold it up, give it a quick, gentle spin, and just make sure that there's no visible bubbles inside. So, with jam, or with chutney, or something that's a bit more viscous, and a bit thicker in consistency, bubbles are gonna be more of an issue. But with a really watery brine like this, not so much. If you do see bubbles in there, you wanna take a tool, such as a chopstick, and just go up and down inside the jar, poking all the bubbles. You don't want any air that's in between the foodstuffs in your jar. That's a place where botulism can grow. We're gonna pop our lids on right over the top, so lay them with the wax side down over your nice clean jar rims. I always like to buy the silver. I don't know. They come in a gold tone, too, but I'm just more of a silver girl. Okay. And then, each band, you wanna put over the top of the jar, and screw it on very gently. We call this fingertip tight. So you don't wanna take your whole hand and put it on as tight as you possibly can. That's not the right thing to do. If you do that, you're not gonna allow the air to escape to create that good vacuum seal in the jar. So just gently fingertip tight the band onto the jar. Watch and listen. (metal lid popping) When the top lid of the jar bounces back, and you can hear it going up and down, that means that your jar is not yet sealed. In order to give these jars a good, solid seal, we're gonna put them into our hot water bath, which is basically just a big boiling pot of water, and we are going to process them, meaning boil them in water, covered by at least two inches, for 15 minutes in order bring all of the air up and out of the jar, and to create a solid vacuum seal. Okay, pickled carrots, you process and get delicious. Thank you! See those little air bubbles coming up right there? That's a very good sign. You want all of the air inside the jars to escape from the top. Once this really starts boiling, you're gonna see a lot more of that. These jars need a fifteen minute process, which means you don't start your timer until the water is rapidly boiling. At that point, you start counting 15 minutes.

Hot water process jars

- Look at these! They're beautiful! We worked so hard, and we made these gorgeous pickled carrots. Now, we've let these cool completely. And we're gonna do a quick check to make sure that they're properly sealed. Now if you have one of these jars that didn't seal properly no worries. You can still eat the pickles. After it's cooled completely just move it to the refrigerator and just eat it within a few months. Otherwise, the rest of these are ready to sit on your shelf for up to a year. Once the jar is opened they really aren't gonna spoil. You could just eat the carrots until you just don't like the way they taste anymore. But they're pretty much safe in the refrigerator for a very long time. Now, this is the hard part. You have to let your pickles sit in the brine for three to five days before eating. If carrots aren't your thing there are definitely plenty of alternatives for you. I highly recommend using celery, which I like to peel before pickling. Just so you don't get those little strings in between your teeth. I also love to use (mumbling) radish which is a really mild Japanese radish. And of course, everybody's favorite quintessential pickle, straight up cucumber. However, note that if you are using the radish or the cucumber I process those for only 10 minutes. This way the vegetable retains more of its integrity. And it's really firm and really crisp, which I really really value. And let's say you're just not into cumin or fennel seed, or any of the other spices that we used today. Feel free to swap out slices of lemon. Slices of lime. Some cinnamon sticks. Some bay leaf. A couple of slices of fresh ginger. Or, of course, get a really nice kick from some crushed pepper flakes. You

have all the skills that you need now to can your own jams, your own marmalades, et cetera, as well as your own pickles. So don't be afraid to get out and use them. I almost forgot. We have to put a label on these. Now I know that you're thinking, of course I'll remember that it's my own carrot pickles. But believe me, canning is addictive. And once you get going you are not gonna remember what's what or when you made it. Remember that any food on your shelf is stable and good to eat for about a year.