

York 4-H Demonstration, Speaking Contest

YORK - The York County 4-H Demonstration and Public Speaking contest was held June 19th, at the 4-H Center. Twenty-five 4-H members participated in this county event which en-

courages youth to develop leadership skills through a presentation to friends, family, peers and leaders.

High score in the junior division of the Animal Science Demon-

stration Category was Sarah Carlson of Dillsburg. In the Senior Division, Christa Shultz of Wellsville, and Kris Miller of York, tied for first place.

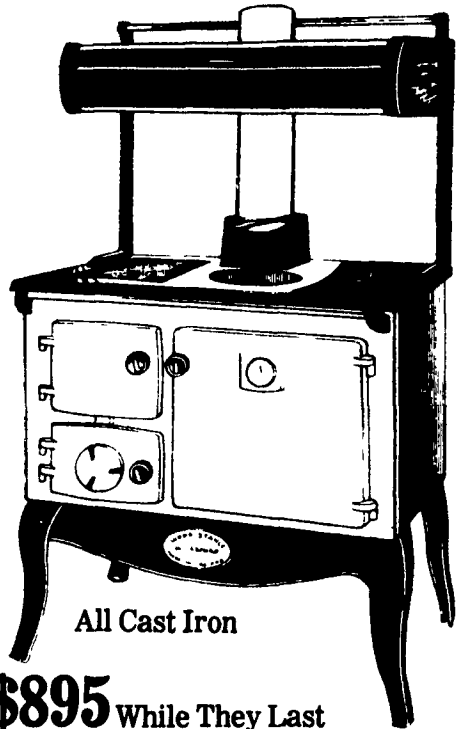
In the Foods and Nutrition Category, Jessica Price of Dover won in the junior division. In the General Category, Oona Horn of Dover, was the top scorer in the junior division and Jody Miller of Spring Grove won the senior division.

The Public Speaking Contest results were as follows. Julie Hughes of Hanover won a first in the junior division and Mike Lowe of Fawn Grove the first place in the

senior division.

Top placing individuals will have the opportunity to participate in the Regional Contest and then move on to the State Contest.

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Now You Can Blanch In Your Microwave

Summer vegetable harvests are just starting, and storing your garden's bounty in the freezer is easy. It's even easier when you blanch the vegetables in your microwave.

A study was completed last summer at Cornell University on microwave blanching. The study measured how effectively the microwave destroyed the enzyme activity, which is needed for proper blanching. The study also measured the vitamin C content of vegetables before blanching, and after both conventional and microwave blanching.

This study established a microwave blanching technique that effectively destroyed the enzymes. They also found that microwave blanching preserved more vitamin C in the vegetables than conventional blanching techniques.

I was delighted to see these positive results. An earlier study showed a greater vitamin loss during microwave blanching and poor texture in the frozen vegetables.

However, I have been blanching vegetables in my microwave for several years and have been pleased with the vegetables' quality. Microwave blanched vegetables have a garden fresh taste, beautiful color and firm, crisp texture.

But before you get all set to blanch in your microwave, I have some bad news for you. The Cornell study and the techniques they used were developed using a special plastic microwave freezer bag that is not yet available in the East.

This plastic bag is a new product that looks similar to the heavy zip-top freezer bags. It has a zipper closing in top, but the bottom of the bag is split into two pouches. This lets the bag stand upright easily for filling and microwaving. It was also designed for even microwave penetration of the food.

I checked with Dow Consumer Services recently and was told that their new bag is being test marketed in the Southwest and Western states, and will not be available here in the East this summer. It has been very successful so far, and the company expects it to be available here sometime next year.

Since those bags are not available yet in this area, I've been trying the Cornell blanching techniques with the heavy zip-top freezer bags, which are available here. So far, these have worked very well, but sometimes you have to prop up the bag.

Here's a summary of the Cornell Blanching process, with minor changes made to adapt to the freezer bag shape. I've used the heavy zip-top freezer storage bags. My results have been good, though I cannot measure the enzyme activity or vitamin content. If you use thinner freezer bags, the plastic may melt from the heat of

the steam and vegetables during blanching.

If you do not want to use the plastic bags, vegetables may be blanched in a covered casserole. Chill in ice water and package as desired. Soaking the vegetables directly in the water will lead to greater vitamin loss than immersing the bags.

Microwave Blanching:

1. Wash good quality fresh vegetables and trim to a uniform size. Cut beans, broccoli, cauliflower, etc. into 1½ to 2-inch pieces. Slice carrots, summer squashes, parsnips, etc. into ¼-inch slices. For cubed vegetables, cut into ¾-inch cubes.

2. Fold zipper neck of heavy plastic freezer bags down to form a one inch cuff, to make the bag easier to fill. Use either pint or quart size, depending on quantity desired.

3. Fill bags with vegetables to about ¾ full. Add 2 to 3 tablespoons water to a pint-size bag or 4 to 5 tablespoons water to a quart-size bag. Use smaller amount for juicy vegetables, and larger amount for drier or tougher root vegetables like carrots and for green beans.

4. Unfold cuff and seal top of bag leaving a 1-inch opening for a vent. Spread vegetables out in as thin a layer in the bag as possible to ensure even cooking. If necessary, prop opening of bag up a little so water or vegetables don't leak out.

Microwave on high, one bag at a time. For quart bags, rearrange vegetables in bag (shake it) once halfway through. For most vegetables, microwave blanching time will be: pint bags: 2 to 3 minutes and quart bags: 4 to 5 minutes. Spinach and greens need less time, about 1 minute for pints and 1½ minutes for quarts. Corn kernels, cauliflower and green beans may need a little longer: 4 minutes for pints and 6 minutes for quarts.

Vegetables are blanched when the color becomes uniformly brighter and the texture is softer. A temperature probe can make blanching more accurate: Insert probe in bag through vent and microwave on high to 190°F.

5. Use potholders or oven mitt and remove bag from microwave. Put tag into container of ice water, up to neck. Don't let the water get into bag. The bag will be very soft and limp when hot and will stiffen in the ice water. When thoroughly cooled, remove bag from water, press out air, seal top and freeze.

The Dow Company has printed a pamphlet on this microwave blanching technique which contains instructions and a chart giving more exact blanching times for each vegetable. For your free copy, write to: "Blanching Brochure," Dow Consumer Products, Inc., P.O. Box 68511, Indianapolis, In. 46268.

NOTE: The blanching times above are for 600 to 700 watt microwave ovens. If your oven has 500 to 600 W, add 10 seconds to each minute; for 400 to 500 W, add 20 seconds to each minute.

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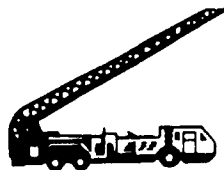
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