



Have You Heard?

By Doris Thomas
Lancaster Extension
Home Economist

ARE YOU A SAFE CANNER?

Home canning season is just about upon us for another season. Eating home-canned foods should be a healthy safe experience. And, if you follow the rules, it can be.

Safe canning involves a series of safety tips and checks. After all, food preservation is a science. And science is serious, but by not following the rules, you may be placing yourself, your family and your guests at serious risk.

As scientific knowledge about food safety continues to evolve,

recommendations for home canning change; we know more today than ever before.

Unfortunately, from the phone calls I receive, I have learned that some long-time canners are skeptical of new canning procedures. Why? Because they have been doing things their way since grandmother's time without any problems.

These methods could have been dangerous even generations ago, but no one made the connection between illness and food.

Foods have changed, too. Grow-

ing conditions, use of pesticides and herbicides — all affect the chemical balance in produce. Science has also changed some of our favorite foods to meet today's tastes. Consider how many new types of corn and varieties of apples have been developed since grandmother's day. The chemical composition of these and other foods are different enough from the originals that old canning recipes simply do not always do the job.

How does this impact home canning? Well, one major recommendation is that all low-acid foods must be processed in a pressure canner to eliminate the risk of botulism, a potentially fatal bacterial toxin that can also cause muscular paralysis, vision problems and difficulty in breathing.

The lower the amount of acid a food contains, the higher its pH value. Low-acid foods include meats, seafoods, poultry, dairy products and all vegetables, except acidified tomatoes. Acidity prevents the growth of botulism.

Home canning today requires

recipes developed today. You must follow current processing methods because they have been scientifically developed for safety.

If you need any more convincing, consider this serious true story: A faithful canner for 40 years was hospitalized near-death after tasting a batch of her home-canned vegetables, the vegetables she had processed the same way for 40 years without incident. What happened? She had been incorrectly canning her vegetables in a boiling water canner for 40

years; it was mere luck that she had not poisoned hundreds of people with her previously home canned food.

It CAN happen to you, especially if you say, I have been doing it this way all my life, and I've never had a problem!

So be a safe canner and always follow current USDA approved recommendations, such as those found in their Complete Guide To Home Canning book which is available at your County Extension Office.

Mercer, Clearfield Counties Plan Pageants

MERCER (Mercer Co.) — The Mercer County Dairy Princess Pageant will be held on Tuesday, June 18, at the Mercer County Extension Center. Cow-Tail Hour will begin at 7:00 p.m. with the banquet at 7:30 p.m. Reservations are \$6 for adults and \$3 for children.

Contestants are Onalee Smith, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Smith of Greenville, and Julia

Kasbee, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Kasbee of Hadley.

For reservations, call (814) 528-9508 or (814) 786-9058.

CLEARFIELD (Clearfield Co.) — The Clearfield County Dairy Princess pageant slated for June 15 will include an ice cream social and a Dairy Miss crowing. The ceremony begins at 8 p.m. at the Civic Center in Curwensville.

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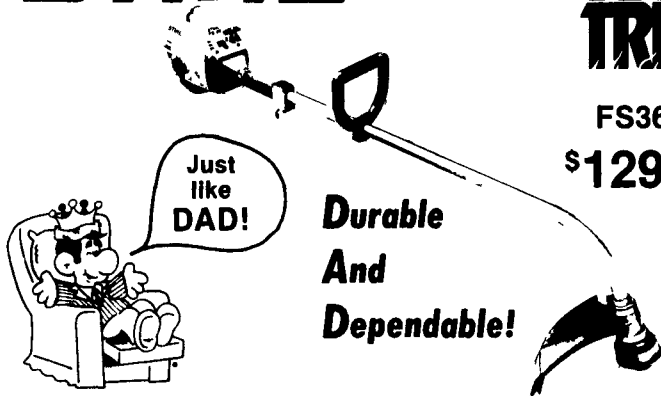
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