



Lebanon Extension home economist Alletta Schadler watches as Andrea Horner of Lebanon removes jars from canner.

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Lancaster Farming Staff
LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — Canning isn't done the way Grandma used to do it.

Her methods are considered unsafe and potentially a risk for botulism poisoning.

Before you protest, "But I have been canning the same way that Grandma did for many years and have not had any problems," consider that bacteria appears to be increasing and it can survive and grow inside a sealed jar of food.

Poisonous toxin from even a tiny taste of food containing clostridium botulinum is so potent that it can be fatal.

Pressure canning is the only recommended method for canning meat and low acid vegetables according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

If you need instructions on how to can safely, your county extension office is the place to contact. Extension services offer numerous free instruction sheets on preserving fruits, vegetables, and meats. Also available is a manual on the Complete Guide to Home Canning, for only \$6. The easy to read manual includes extensive directions and recipes for almost every food that is preserved in the Northeast.

Recently Alletta Schadler, Lebanon County Extension home economist, held two workshops to teach safe canning methods. Here is some of the information she packed into a three-hour session, but if you are serious about canning, it is worth your time to attend a canning workshop. Contact your county extension office listed in the phone book under Penn State Cooperative Extension to see if your county is holding workshops or if you would like printed information on canning.

According to Schadler, high-acid foods such as fruits, most tomatoes, and pickled products are still considered safe to preserve by using a boiling water bath.

Canning is a safe and economical way to preserve summer produce if you adhere to the following guidelines.

- Choose fresh fruits and vegetables as many foods begin losing some of their vitamins when harvested.

- Wash or peel produce.
- Add lemon juice or vinegar to tomatoes since many tomatoes are now borderline acid and need acid to properly preserve it.

- Use clean jars, sterilized if the processed food is not boiled for more than 10 minutes

- Always use new self-sealing lids.

- Process jars in a boiling-water or pressure canner for the correct period of time.

While many people are using less sugar to can fruits, they should be aware that the more sugar that is used to can fruit such as peaches, the firmer it becomes.

One way to reduce sugar is to use a lighter syrup but hot pack the fruit instead of raw pack. Schadler said that she canned peaches with light syrup using both raw and hot packed methods. When the finished product was cooled, the hot packed peaches tasted much sweeter than those packed raw.

Here is the recipe for canning peaches according to the hot pack method.

Canning peaches

Dip peaches in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds or until skins loosen. Dip quickly in cold water and slip off skins. Cut in half, remove pits, and slice if desired.

To prevent darkening, keep peeled fruit in water with vitamin C made by mixing 1 teaspoon ascorbic acid crystals, or six 500-milligram vitamin C tablets in 1 gallon water.

To make a very light syrup for a canner load of quarts, mix 1½ cups sugar in 10½ cups water and heat to dissolve; or mix and dissolve 2¼ cups sugar in 9 cups water to make a light syrup; or 3¾ cups sugar in 8¼ cups water to make a medium syrup.

To make a hot pack, place drained fruit in boiling syrup, juice, or water and bring to a boil. Fill clean jars with hot fruit and cooking liquid. Leave ½-inch headspace, and wipe sealing edge of jars with a clean, damp paper towel. Add lids and tighten screw bands. You may process jars in a boiling water or pressure canner.

To process in a boiling water canner, preheat canner filled halfway with water to 180 degrees for hot packs or 140 degrees for raw packs. Load sealed jars onto canner rack and lower with handles; or load one jar at a time with a jar lifter onto rack in canner. Add water if needed to a level of 1-inch above jars and add cover. When water boils vigorously, lower heat to maintain a gentle boil and process 25 minutes for quarts.

Pressure canning

Fruit can be processed in a pressure canner but it takes longer to do. Many people believe that pressure canning will save time, because the processing time is shorter, but in actuality it takes longer since the timing is begun after the correct pressure is reached (about 30 minutes), then the pressure canner is air-cooled,

which takes 30 to 45 additional minutes.

Several types of pressure canners are available. The lightweight canners heat and cool faster. Weighted gauges are recommended more than dial gauges as weighted gauges never go out of calibration.

Note: Calibration of pressure canners with dial gauges should be checked annually. Most extension offices will check it free of charge. Parts may be purchased at most stores that sell canning supplies.

Handle canner lid gaskets and lids carefully as nicked edges will allow steam leaks during pressurization of canners. Follow these steps for successful pressure canning:

- Put 2 to 3 inches hot water in canner. Place filled jars on the rack, using a jar lifter. Fasten canner lid securely.

- Leave weight off vent port. Heat the fruit at the highest setting until steam flows for the vent port.

- Maintain high heat setting, exhaust steam 10 minutes, and then place weight on vent port. The canner will pressurize during the next 3 to 5 minutes.

- Start timing the process when the pressure reading on the dial gauge indicates that the recommended pressure has been reached or when the weighted gauge begins to jiggle or rock.

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- Regulate heat under the canner to maintain a steady pressure at or slightly above the correct gauge pressure. Quick and large pressure variations during processing may cause unnecessary liquid losses from jars.

- When the timed process is completed, turn off the heat, remove the canner from heat if possible, and let the canner depressurize. Do not force-cool the canner as it may result in food spoilage. Cooling the canner with cold running water or opening the vent port before the canner is fully depressurized will cause loss of liquid from jars and seal failures. Force-cooling may also warp the canner lid of older model canners, causing steam leaks.

- After the canner is depressurized, remove the weight from the vent port. Wait 2 minutes, unfasten the lid, and remove it carefully. Lift the lid away from you so that the steam does not burn your face.

- Remove jars with a lifter, and place on towel on cooling rack, if

desired.

When shopping for a pressure canner, remember that stoves with ceramic tops or solid elements are not suitable for canning.

In addition to teaching proper canning techniques, Schadler addressed many myths and questions surrounding food preservation.

- Jars should not be covered with a towel when removed from canner as it slows down the cooling process.

- The average life of a canning jar is 13 to 14 uses. Although jars do not wear out, they develop stress points from bumping and will break under quick temperature changes.

- Do not turn jar rings too tight or air can not escape to allow a proper seal. Screw jar rings just to catch. Then tighten ¼ turn.

- Do not retighten jar lids after canning.

- Do not touch lids for 24 hours after canning process is completed.

- Do not turn jars upside down.
- After jars are cooled for 24 hours, remove bands.

- Reuse jar bands as long as they are not rusty.

- Do not boil lids. Heat to 180 degrees to soften sealing compound before placing on jar top.

- Shelf-life for lids should not be more than 2 or 3 years as lid sealant may become brittle and not soften.

- Make sure lids are perfect when removing from box. If scratched, do not use.

- Sterilize jars if processing food less than 10 minutes such as in jelly making.

- Do not oven can.

- Hard water leaves calcium deposits on jars. To avoid, bring water to a boil and let cool before placing jars in the water. The cal-

Safe Canning

With

Alletta Schadler

How To Can Foods

TOWANDA (Bradford Co.) — Learn How To Can Foods At Home is a two-part class that is intended for the person who wants to learn the basics of home canning. Through demonstration and hands-on activities, participants will learn safe methods for boiling water and pressure canning.

Offered by Penn State Cooperative Extension of Bradford County, the class will be held on Thursdays, August 5 and August 12. Class time for both sessions will

cium will precipitate out as the water cools. Pour the clear water into your canner.

Pickles

Use canning pickling salt to prevent clumping or cloudiness. Iodized salt reacts to sugar and results in odd coloring such as making cauliflower pink or purple.

Use pickling lime to make pickles crisp. Do not substitute gardening lime.

Use fresh pickling and whole spices as spices become flat. Use fresh each year. Dill heads may be frozen to keep fresh.

May substitute 1 to 2 tablespoons dill seed in place of 1 head dill.

PICKLED BEETS

7 pounds of 2- to 2½-inch diameter beets

4 cups vinegar
¼ cup canning or pickling salt
2 cups sugar
2 cups water
2 cinnamon sticks
12 whole cloves
4 to 6 onions, if desired

Yield: about 8 pints.

Trim off beet tops, leaving 1-inch stem and roots to prevent bleeding of color. Wash thoroughly. Sort for size. Cover similar sizes together with boiling water and cook until tender (about 25 to 30 minutes). Caution: Drain and discard liquid. Cool beets. Trim off roots and stems and slip off skins. Slice into ¼-inch slices. Peel and thinly slice onions. Combine vinegar, salt, sugar, and fresh water. Put spices in cheesecloth bag and add to vinegar mixture. Bring to a boil. Add beets and onions. Simmer 5 minutes. Remove spice bag. Fill jars with beets and onions, leaving ½-inch headspace. Add hot vinegar solution, allowing ½-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process to 30 minutes in boiling water bath.

be 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. The classes will be held at the Extension Office, 701 South Fourth Street, Towanda.

Cost for the class is \$10 per participant and includes the U.S. Department of Agriculture publication, Complete Guide To Home Canning. Persons interested in attending must register by Friday, July 30. To register contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension Office in Bradford County at the above address or (717) 265-2896.