

Well Preserved

The Well Preserved news column is prepared by Lancaster County Cooperative Extension. It includes food preservation information and questions.

Food and Floods

Recent storms have made us mindful of the necessity of being prepared for emergencies. Both power outages and flooding can affect food storage. In a previous column we discussed how to handle foods in a power outage. A recent phone caller to the extension office reported that all her home canned foods were under water and she wondered what she could save. Thus, today's column will address food safety in floods. The following recommendations are from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Because flood water contains many different types of pollutants, most foods that come into contact with them will need to be destroyed to prevent illness. All unwrapped foods, crown-capped bottles, screw-top glass containers, flip top cans, and packaged foods that are not airtight and cannot be washed will need to be destroyed.

Glass and plastic bottles and jars (even ones that have been opened) should be discarded. Examples include mayonnaise, flavoring extracts, jellies, bottled water, and vegetable oil. The cork-lined, waxed cardboard, pop tops, peel-off tops, or waxed seals used in these bottles and jars are nearly impossible to clean around the lid or opening. The grooves and indentations around the openings and the liners are good hiding places for bacteria. Home canned foods are in the same category.

The sealing compound that comes into contact with the rim of the glass jar can harbor bacteria that are not destroyed in a disinfectant wash.

Discard foods in cardboard boxes such as juice boxes, paper, foil, cellophane, cloth, or any other kind of flexible container. The paper covering is a great place for harmful bacteria to hide. Other items to discard are fresh produce, spices, seasonings, flour, sugar, grains, pasta, coffee and others staples stored in canisters, and opened containers and packages of any kind. Discard canned goods that are dented on the lids or seams, or that are leaking or bulging because these are signs or gasses forming inside the can from spoilage already taking place. Discard canned goods that are rusted unless the rust can be easily removed by light rubbing.

So what can be saved? Commercially canned goods in smooth top tin type cans that are not bulging, leaking, or dented. Note that an increasing number of canned products have a pop top lid similar to a soda can and can not be safely sanitized. For cans with smooth lids, use the following procedure for safely sanitizing them. Mark the contents on the can with a permanent ink pen. Remove paper labels because they can harbor dangerous bacteria. Wash cans in a strong detergent solution with a scrub brush. Carefully clean areas around lids and seams. Soak cans in a solution of 2 teaspoons chlorine bleach per quart of room temperature water for 15 minutes. Place cans on sides to



air dry. Cans need to dry before opening. Throw away any cans that may have come in contact with industrial or septic waste. If you are unsure about the safety of any food, throw it out.

Remember to clean and sanitize any kitchen areas and items that have come in contact with flood waters. Scrub kitchen counters, pantry shelves, refrigerators, and stoves with warm soapy water. Rinse and wipe with a solution of 2 teaspoons of chlorine bleach to one quart of water using a clean cloth. Sanitize dishes and glassware the same way. Disinfect metal pans and utensils by boiling them in water for 10 minutes. Wooden and plastic items may absorb or hide bacteria making them difficult to clean and sanitize. Therefore, discard wooden spoons, wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, and baby bottle nipples and pacifiers. Wash all kitchen linens in detergent and hot water, and use a chlorine bleach to sanitize them following directions on the bleach container.

If you have food preservation questions, a home economist is available to answer questions on Wednesdays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., call (717) 394-6851 or write Penn State Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County, 1383 Arcadia Rd., Rm. 1, Lancaster, PA 17601.

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ANSWER — A reader wanted to know where she could buy a utility cart like the one she has. Thanks to the man who responded that he has a metal one with similar dimensions as noted. It is used and in good condition. If interested, call (717) 548-3116.

ANSWER — Warren Glidewell, Bloomsburg, wanted to know where to find Flemish giant rabbits in a fawn color. Thanks to a reader who offers the following information: Closest breeder to Bloomsburg: Frank Welch, Linden: (570) 321-1013; or you can go online and get more information from the National

Federation of Flemish Giant Rabbit Breeder: www.NFFGRB.com.

ANSWER — A reader wanted to know where to purchase dry white wine for making the aloe vera cream. It can be purchased in a state store or wherever wines are sold.

Here is a different recipe to make aloe vera salve from a reader.

Aloe Vera

1 quart healing cactus plants (aloe vera plant), cut up fine and fried in

7½ ounces Vaseline

Drain mixture and combine with 3 ounces lanolin. Store in jars.

Are You Turning 65 Soon?

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — If you or someone you know will turn 65 soon, take note. At 65, you can take advantage of Medicare, a federally-subsidized insurance plan, but there are rules, and they're strict.

It's crucial that you begin planning for your induction into Medicare at least nine months before your birthday.

If you fail to enroll in Medicare during the seven-month window around your 65th birthday, you can't enroll until the following calendar year — Jan. 1 to March 31. And coverage won't begin until July 1 of that year.

A costly mistake because premiums will increase to include a permanent penalty of 10 percent for each year's delay in applying.

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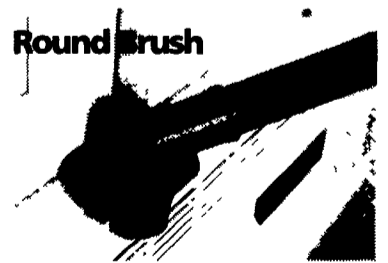
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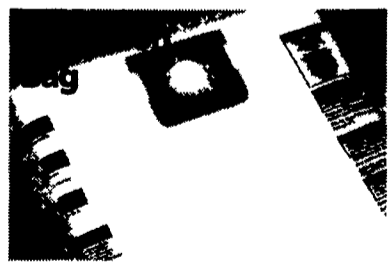
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