

# 'Diet-Breaker' Fills Pantry With Unusual Preserves

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Food And Family  
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ELKTON, Md. — "I'm known as the diet breaker," James Coffey said as a challenge to those who claim they are on a diet.

It's difficult to refuse his assortment of homemade pumpkin and pecan pies and freshly baked apple cake.

The pastry chef and accomplished cook likes to share his culinary specialties with friends and neighbors. In addition to pies, cookies, and cakes, Coffey preserves food that most people have never tasted.

His basement shelves are filled with such items as green tomato mincemeat, preserves of elderberry, blackberry, crab apple, and Concord grapes, and spiced peaches. Jars of canned pork sausage, pork tenderloin, beef, chicken, meatballs, and even meatloaf can be found in his canning cupboards.

He even makes his own soap from bacon grease that he purifies and treats with vinegar and water.

The kitchen has always held a special fascination for Coffey, who grew up watching his grandmother cook and can.

When he attended Baltimore International Cooking School, Coffey knew much more about cooking and baking than his classmates. Unlike them, he grew up knowing how to make seven-minute boiled icing similar to that made for the commercial market.

Although he works as a pastry chef, Coffey said, "I like to bake and can food more than I like to cook. I prefer exact measurements and the precise steps required."

Times have changed since Coffey first learned kitchen basics. Methods once used in canning food are no longer recommended.

It has been difficult for Coffey to adjust to processing foods in pressure canning since he has had so much experience in water bath canning. But Coffey said home economists constantly remind him of the dangers of following old methods.

Although Coffey has learned to adapt his recipes to the approved methods, he enjoys reading old cookbooks and modifying old recipes to improve them.

Some recipes, he believes, can't be improved. For example, he prefers to cook down fruit to make jellies and jams the old-fashioned way, instead of using packaged pectin.

He continues to make apple butter the old-fashioned way that his grandmother learned growing up in Virginia. He doesn't add cider, but oil of cinnamon and oil of cloves to keep it from darkening. This, he said, results in a



"I'm the cook, and she's the dishwasher," James Coffey said of the agreement reached by him and his mother, Mary Coffey.

"more red" color.

He makes spaghetti sauce, chili sauce, taco soup, and rhubarb punch.

He estimates that he preserves 100-200 jars filled with produce or meat annually. Some of his specialties are canning pork sausage, beef, chicken, meatballs, and meatloaf. He explained that meatloaf is placed uncooked in a wide-mouth jar. After pressure canning, the meatloaf shrinks so that it can easily slip out of the jar when ready to serve.

Another unusual item he cans is pecans. He packs nuts in clean, dry jars, seals with lids and processes in the oven at 250 degrees for 45 minutes. "Turn off the oven, but let cool 30 minutes before opening the oven door or the jars will break," Coffey said.

He enters many of his items in the Cecil County, Maryland and Delaware fairs.

He's even written some articles about preserving food for some issues of Old Order Amish newspapers.

He lives with his mother Mary Coffey in the home in which he grew up. He cooks, and she washes the dishes.

"I like anything he makes," his mother said. "I don't cook. I do awful things to food."

Although he relies on his neighbor's garden for most of the produce he preserves, Coffey

continues to grow his own saffron, which at this time of the year continues to produce stamens that must be gathered daily.

Coffey's passion for cooking has led him into collecting old jars, canning supplies, and cookbooks. Turn to the Antiques Center on page B23 to read about his collection of 3,000 cookbooks and other culinary-related items.

Although it is a bit late in the harvesting season, here are a few canning recipes from Coffey. He makes chowchow this time of the year using vegetables he canned earlier in the season and cauliflower in season.

## PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH CHOWCHOW

1 quart lima beans  
1 quart corn, cut off the cob  
1 quart green beans  
1 quart yellow beans  
1 quart cauliflower  
1 quart kidney beans (canned), drained, rinsed  
1 quart green peppers  
1 quart red peppers  
1 quart celery  
1 quart carrots  
1 quart onions

Syrup for each 6 quarts:

1 quart cider vinegar  
6 cups granulated sugar  
1 tablespoon celery seed  
1 tablespoon mustard seed  
3 drops oil of cinnamon  
3 drops oil of cloves (Measure oils on sugar and count drops. Do not overdo).

Clean and prepare all vegetables for table use. Cook each vegetable separately until crisp-tender. Most fresh vegetables will cook in 10 to 20 minutes (beans, celery, carrots, and cauliflower), while peppers, corn, and onions will cook in only 4 or 5 minutes. For frozen ones, heat only to thaw, but do not cook.

When done, drain all vegetables thoroughly and mix with hands gently in a large bowl or pan to combine. Pack mixed vegetables in pint or quart jars.

Make syrup by mixing vinegar, sugar, seed, and oil in a large saucepan (not aluminum) and bring to a rolling boil. Make sure all sugar is dissolved. Fill jars with syrup (fill only to jar neck with both vegetables and syrup). Wipe jar rims clean and make sure no seed is on the rims or they will not seal.

Seal jars according to the instructions on the brand lids used. Process (cold pack) for 10 minutes for pint jars and 15 minutes for quart jars in boiling water bath. Cool and test for seals.

This will make 12 to 15 quarts.

## TACO SOUP

3 pounds lean ground beef  
1-2 packages taco seasoning mix (to desired taste)  
2 small onions, chopped  
1 quart corn  
1 quart water  
1 quart pizza sauce  
Sugar to taste  
2 15-ounce cans chili beans  
Brown ground beef and onions. Add remaining ingredients and simmer 15 minutes. (One package of taco seasoning may be enough for your taste. Two packages make it quite spicy). Fill jars, leaving one-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and seal. In pressure canner, cook 60 minutes for pints and 75 minutes for quarts at 10-11 pounds pressure. Makes 7-9 quarts.

## PUMPKIN BUTTER

16 cups pureed pumpkin  
8 cups light brown sugar  
4-6 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice  
Combine all ingredients and

cook until thick (in oven at 350 degrees or on stove top). Fill half-pint or pint jars with hot pumpkin butter. Leave 1/2-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims. Seal and process in pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure for 10 minutes. Makes 7-8 pints.

## CANNED PORK SAUSAGE

10 pounds ground pork  
1/4 cup canning salt  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1 tablespoon sage  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
1/8-1/4 teaspoon red pepper  
For another variation, add 1 tablespoon Tenderquick, a meat curing salt. Mix together ingredients. Shape seasoned sausage into patties that will fit into wide-mouth jar. Place sausage patties on a sheet pan and bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes. Pack hot sausage patties into clean jars. Discard grease. Wipe jar rims. Seal. Pressure can at 10 pounds pressure for 75 minutes for pints or 90 minutes for quarts.

Sausage can also be raw packed into jars. Leave one-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims. Seal and process as above. This is good for casseroles or for sausage gravy. Pack rather tightly. Do not overdo it or jars will burst.

## Well Preserved

The Well Preserved news column is prepared by Lancaster County Cooperative Extension.

### Winter Canning — Part 2

Today's article includes ideas for winter canning using the boiling water bath canner. These recipes contain sufficient amounts of high acid foods or sugar to prevent bacteria growth. Soft spreads, relishes, and syrups fall into this category.

Relishes are prepared using chopped fruits or vegetables cooked in a spicy vinegar solution. Sugar may be added for a sweet relish, and hot peppers or other spices may be added for a hot relish. Cranberry apple relish makes a nice topping for meats and sandwiches. Cooked whole cranberry sauce can be canned with only 10 minutes processing time.

With the help of the freezer and dry storage, relish ingredients are available year round. Frozen corn can be used in a corn relish. Onions in dry storage can be used in a plain onion relish, pepper-onion relish, or combined with frozen rhubarb for Victoria relish.

Many relish recipes call for red or green peppers. Store bought peppers can be expensive out of season. However, you can freeze peppers during the summer when they are abundant. Wash, dry, cut, remove seeds, and freeze using the individually quick freeze method. Spread chopped peppers or halves one layer deep on a tray and freeze until solid; package in a vapor proof container and freeze.

Chutneys are a combination of vegetables or fruits, spices, and vinegar cooked for long periods to develop flavor and texture. They are highly spiced and have a sweet-sour combination of flavors. Many chutneys such as dried apricot date chutney contain raisins and other dried fruits. Some contain nuts.

Even pickles can be made in late fall and winter. Pickled cauliflower and spiced pickled cabbage use late crop vegetables.

Three bean salad, a convenient ready to use product, can be made using canned and frozen beans. Cocktail onions can be pickled. Pineapple makes a nice fruit pickle. If dill is needed for

winter pickles, it can be frozen when fresh. Wrap it in foil to prevent odors from getting into other foods.

Spreads such as jams, jellies, and conserves can be made from fall and winter fruits such as cranberries, apples, and oranges. Earlier fruits that have been frozen without added sugar can be thawed and used in spreads. If the fruit has been frozen with added sugar, it will be necessary to know the amount of sugar that was added in order to have a proper set or jell.

If you freeze your own fruit and keep a record of the amount of sugar added, you will be able to subtract that amount from the tested recipe. However, you will need to use pectin that combines the sugar and fruit before the pectin is added. This is usually the liquid-type pectin. Frozen fruit is also suitable for long cooking spread recipes.

Recipes developed for use with commercially canned, bottled, or frozen juices can be found on pectin packages.

Apple or grape jelly made from bottled juice is very easy to make. Cranberry cider jelly uses bought juices, and cherry almond jam is made from frozen cherries.

Conserves are jam like products made by cooking two or more fruits with sugar to a jam like consistency. The traditional nuts and raisins in a conserve can be combined with canned pineapple, apples, or dried fruits for a specialty spread.

When dried fruits are added to a conserve, no sugar is needed to provide sweetness making it a spread suitable for special diets. Pineapple apricot conserve and apple cinnamon conserve are examples. Ambrosia conserve uses canned or fresh pineapple, maraschino cherries, almonds, and coconut for a tropical treat.

Other winter canning ideas include flavored vinegar using fresh or dried herbs and specialty syrups. Maple walnut syrup and apple cinnamon syrup contain plenty of flavor making them suitable for a special gift.

Remember that all the above recipes need to be processed to destroy harmful bacteria, molds, and yeast that can cause spoilage.



Coffey shows off a few of his basement shelves filled with such items as green tomato mincemeat, preserves of elderberry, blackberry, crab apple, and Concord grapes, and spiced peaches. Jars of canned pork sausage, pork tenderloin, beef, chicken, meatballs, and even meatloaf can be found in his canning cupboards.