

News Column

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Preparing for Canning

Is your kitchen overflowing with an abundance from this year's growing season?

Many gardeners will harvest their produce for weeks to come and might not be able to eat it all before it goes bad.

Thanks to food preservation practices such as freezing, dehydrating, and canning, gardeners have the potential to enjoy their bountiful harvest well past the growing season. Not only does this help save costs on grocery bills throughout the year, but it also cuts down on food waste.

There are two safe ways of canning depending on the type of food being processed. The boiling water bath method is safe for fruits, tomatoes, pickles, jams, and jellies. Pressure canning is the only safe option for canning vegetables, meats, poultry, and seafood.

Regardless of the type of canning, using tested recipes exclusively is highly recommended. Canning processes can create a dangerous environment for bacteria to live and thrive in if not done correctly. Although Grandma's tried and true secret family recipes are delicious, they might not necessarily be safe. It is important to verify all recipes with a reliable source.

A full list of approved canning recipes can be found online through the Rapid Response Center with K-State Research and Extension at <https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/preservation/recipes.html>.

Many Kansans have already done some prep work by buying jars, lids, and rings. However, many do not know about one very important preparation step for food safety – dial gauge testing. When using a pressure canner with a dial gauge, it should be tested for accuracy at least once a year. This is essential to ensure that foods are processed at a high enough pressure to kill harmful bacteria and spoilage microorganisms. Even if your gauge is only 1 pound off, it can create major food safety concerns.

Testing of gauges is a free service available at the Greenwood County Extension Office for the following brands of pressure canners – Presto, National, Maid of Honor, and Magic Seal. If you are interested in having your dial gauge tested, please bring in your canner lid and dial gauge.

By using tested recipes and having your dial gauge tested yearly, you can ensure that your food preservation process is safe. This will help eliminate any worries concerning food safety when you go to serve your beautiful homegrown foods throughout the rest of the year.

For more information about Family and Community Wellness, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension, contact the office at 620-583-7455, email me at celutz@ksu.edu, or stop by the office. Visit the K-State Research and Extension - Greenwood County Facebook page and www.greenwood.k-state.edu for more up-to-date information on programming.