



ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM/ LIMESTONE COUNTY OFFICE

The Garden Spot For week of July 27, 2009

Food Preservation Tidbits, Hints, and Myths

Gardens are generally doing well this year. We're seeing lots of tomatoes, corn, green beans, okra, peas, and other garden produce being harvested right now. Today's article will be a little bit different. It will be a small collection of random information on different aspects of food preservation. The points given are based on calls and questions received at Extension offices, along with some hints that will make your food preservation safer and simpler.

- ✓ Home-canned food is not automatically considered safe Just because a jar is sealed (or seals). Jars can still seal with improper processing; but inadequate processing will not kill toxins or bacteria that will cause food to spoil or make you sick.
- ✓ ALL foods should be processed in either a pressure canner or water-bath canner (method depends on acid content of food). This includes jellied products and pickled products.
- ✓ After filling your jars, do not over-tighten the rings. In the past, grandma would tighten the rings on the lid (flats) as tight as possible. Modern jar flats (lids) are made with higher-quality compounds than in past years. Over-tightening may actually cause the lid to not seal or buckle. ONLY FINGER-TIGHTEN the rings.
- ✓ Canning lids CANNOT be re-used. Even if you have to re-process your foods (product didn't seal, etc.), use a new lid/flat. Rings may be re-used after cleaning.

- ✓ Be careful about not over-filling your jars. Liquids in jars will expand when heated in the water-bath or pressure canner. If the jars are over-filled, the liquids will flow out through the top of the jars. This could cause loss of liquid in the jar and possibly keep the jar from sealing if sediment remains on the top of the jar.
- ✓ When canning, have your canner water hot (boiling) so you will not have to wait after your jars are filled. If you have to wait to prepare your canner, the jars could seal without the proper processing. They need to go in the hot water/canner immediately after the lids go on the jars.
- ✓ If you are preparing to freeze okra or squash for frying, blanch them whole rather than slicing first. Then slice them after cooling. This will keep the okra or squash firmer and you'll have a better-quality product that is easier to handle.
- ✓ Oven canning is NOT recommended. It will not prevent risks of spoilage.
- ✓ After removing jars from your canner, turning them upside down does NOT help them seal. DO NOT turn them upside down on the counter.
- ✓ Several calls have come in the office about freezing corn in the shucks without blanching. When freezing corn this way, first peel the shucks down. Then remove the silks, wash the ears of corn and blanch them. After blanching, pull the shucks back up and freeze the corn in freezer bags.
- ✓ Use pickling salt in home canning. Table salt (whether with or without iodine added) has some anti-caking ingredients that can cause your pickles or other home-canned products to be cloudy.
- ✓ Do not double recipes of jellied or pickled products.

If you have questions on food preservation, you may call the Limestone County Extension office at 232-5510. Publications on food preservation are also available, including free materials on single topics (canning tomatoes, green beans, freezing vegetables, etc.). The book "Home Food Preservation", prepared by Auburn University, sells for \$9 and contains 234

pages of instructions and recipes on canning, freezing, pickling, jelly-making, and drying. It is probably the most complete guide to food preservation you will find anywhere.

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