



# Let's Preserve Newsletter

Lancaster County

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July 2, 2002

Dear Food Preserver,

*The pace of food preserving always picks up in July as the green beans start to produce and as local orchards provide berries, cherries, apricots, and plums. There is always a sense of satisfaction when you count the packs of berries in the freezer or the jars on the counter.*

*Recently we were reminiscing how food preserving was a family affair when we were younger. My job was to pack the fruit into the jars because my hands were smaller and would fit into the jar. Mother peeled the fruit because she could peel faster. Dad took pride in the gardens and picked the produce. Martha said her father always tried to find time to help with peeling the peaches and her brother was noted for picking many buckets of green beans from the "truck patch" (an additional large garden away from the house.) We have fond memories of working together to achieve a common goal because we produced not only food but also positive family relationships. Many good conversations took place as we worked together, and the children were able to see a completed project.*

*Wishing you good times as you harvest and preserve summer's bounty.*

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*In consultation with Martha Zepp*

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## Feature of the Month

Here's a recipe that's sure to become a favorite on pancakes, waffles, or on top of ice cream. Make some for yourself and make some more to give as gifts.

### Blueberry Syrup

- 2 quarts blueberries
- 6 cups water, divided
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
- 3 cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice

Crush blueberries. Combine blueberries, 2 cups water and lemon peel in a medium saucepot. Simmer 5 minutes. Strain through a damp jelly bag or several layers of cheesecloth. Combine sugar and 4 cups water in a medium saucepot; boil to 260 degrees F (adjust for altitude.) Add blueberry juice to sugar syrup. Boil 1 minute. Stir in lemon juice. Ladle hot syrup into hot jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Adjust two-piece caps. Process 10 minutes in a boiling water canner. Yield: about 3 pints.

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## Freezing Spotlights

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### Blueberries

Select full-flavored ripe berries. When you get them home, examine carefully and remove squashed, diseased or moldy berries. Washing results in a tougher skinned product. The National Center of Home Food Preservation recommends that blueberries be frozen without washing and then be washed before being used. This may result in them becoming mushy. Another option is to wash them and then dry them thoroughly by laying them out on a towel before freezing.

Blueberries freeze well using the individually quick freezing method. Freeze them first on a tray before packing into containers as soon as they are frozen.

Blueberries may also be frozen crushed or pureed. Crush or press washed berries through a fine sieve, or puree in a blender or food processor. Mix 1 to 1 1/2 cups of sugar with each quart (2 pounds) of crushed berries or puree. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Pack into containers leaving at least 1/2 inch head space.

### Raspberries

Two-thirds of a pound of fresh raspberries is equivalent to one pint of frozen food. Raspberries should be firm, ripe, and ready to eat. To prepare raspberries for freezing, sort and remove leaves and stems. Wash in cold water handling as little as possible.

Syrup pack: Cover berries with a forty percent syrup, three cups sugar and four cups water.

Dry pack. Add 1/2 cup sugar to one quart (1 1/3 pounds) fruit.

Crushed or pureed fruit: Add 3/4 cup sugar to each quart of fruit, and mix carefully.

### Green beans

Two-thirds to one pound of fresh green beans is equivalent to one pint frozen food. Choose tender, crisp beans with filled pods.

String beans should have ends snapped and strings removed from along the pods. Stringless beans should have ends cut off. Beans may be snapped to desired lengths or packed whole. Wash until clean. Blanch small beans for two minutes and large beans for three minutes.

### Broccoli

One pound of fresh broccoli is equivalent to one pint of frozen food. When selecting broccoli for freezing look for compact, dark green heads. To prepare the broccoli for freezing, wash the broccoli and trim from the stalk. Wash again. Cut into one and one-half inch flowerets. Blanch for three minutes in plain water or in salt water containing four teaspoons salt per gallon of water or steam blanch five minutes.



### Washing Fruits for Freezing-- Getting them Clean

Work in small quantities—only enough for a few containers at a time, to prevent loss of quality and nutrients.

Wash and drain all fruits before removing caps, cores, pits, seeds, skins or shells. Wash small lots at a time through several changes of cold water. Lift produce out of the water so the dirt washed off will not get back on the food. Do not let fruits soak.

### What can be frozen without sugar?

Some fruits such as raspberries, blueberries, steamed apples, gooseberries, currants, cranberries, rhubarb, and figs can be frozen successfully without sugar.

### Pectin Syrup

Pectin Syrup can be used to freeze fruits such as strawberries or peaches. It helps to retain their texture better than if frozen in water or juice. Unsweetened fruits generally yield a product that does not have the plump

texture and good color of those packed with sugar. They also take longer to thaw. Susan Reynolds of the University of Florida suggests pectin syrup may be the solution to improving the texture.

### **Pectin Syrup**

1 package powdered pectin

2 3/4 cups water

Combine pectin and 1 cup water in saucepan. Heat to boiling and boil 1 minute. Remove from heat and add remaining water. Cool. Makes about 3 cups of moderately thick syrup. Add more water if thinner syrup is desired.

Submerge fruit by using a small piece of crumpled water resistant material. Seal tightly.

Note: this is an expensive alternative to freezing in a sugar syrup but may be a good choice for those on special diets.

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## **Paraffin—a No-No?**

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Paraffin or wax sealing of jars is no longer considered an acceptable choice for sealing jams and jellies. Any pinholes, shrinkage or cracks in the wax paraffin allow airborne molds to contaminate and grow on the product. In addition, leaks or holes in the paraffin can allow jelly to seep out during storage and once on the surface, it will provide nutrients for molds to grow on the surface and enter into the spread in the jar. Research indicates that mold growth on jams and jellies provides for potential risk from “mycotoxins” or mold poisons. USDA and the Cooperative Extension Service are endorsing a boiling water canning process for jams and jellies which will make the potential for mold spoilage as small as possible. Besides, the cost of ingredients is high enough to make any preventable loss unacceptable.

Use regular canning jars that have been sterilized by submerging in boiling water for 10 minutes. Fill jars with the hot jam, seal, and process the jars in a boiling water bath for 5 minutes after the water returns to a full boil. If the jars are not presterilized, the processing

time in the boiling water bath is 10 minutes. Presterilization of jars with the shorter processing time is preferred when the fruits may not be naturally high in pectin, since the longer process time in the canner without presterilized jars may weaken these gels.

Processing jams in the boiling water bath is also preferred over the inversion method. (Inverting is turning the filled jar upside down on its lid.) The vacuum seals of inverted jars still tend to be weaker than those produced by the boiling water process. A weaker seal is more likely to fail during storage and the headspace of the jar may retain enough oxygen to allow some mold growth if airborne molds contaminated the surface of the product as the jar was filled and closed.

Years ago mold was considered a nuisance and people just spooned off the moldy parts and ate the jam anyway. Today food scientists are very concerned about the safety of that practice.



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## **Canning Time**

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Remember that most vegetables are low acid foods and will need to be processed in a pressure canner. Only high acid fruits and pickled products that have the acidity increased with vinegar are suitable for processing in the boiling water bath. Tomatoes are included in the high acid food category, but their acid level is borderline and they should have additional juice or 1/2 teaspoon citric acid per quart.

It is important to use a tested recipe for combination foods because the addition of a low acid food to what would appear to be a high acid recipe may change the pH to a risky level.

Never add thickening to canned foods as it makes the food denser and may make it

impossible to reach proper processing temperatures.

### **Green Beans**

An average of 14 pounds of green beans is needed per canner load of 7 quarts; an average of 9 pounds is needed per canner load of 9 pints. A bushel weighs about 30 pounds and yields 12 to 20 quarts.

If desired, add 1 teaspoon of canning or pickling salt per quart. For raw packs, fill jars tightly with prepared beans, leaving 1-inch headspace. Add boiling water over beans, leaving one inch headspace. For hot packs, cover prepared beans in a large pot with boiling water, and boil 5 minutes. Fill jars with beans and the cooking liquid, leaving one inch headspace. Process pints for 20 minutes and quarts for 25 minutes at 11 pounds pressure at altitudes below 2000 feet. Remember to vent the pressure canner by exhausting steam 10 minutes before adding the weighted gauge or closing the petcock to pressurize the canner. Start counting the processing time when the desired pressure is reached.

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### **Resources:**

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“Preparing and Canning Fermented Foods and Pickled Vegetables” is available on the web from the Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky.  
[www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/fcs3/fcs3330/fcs3330.htm](http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/fcs3/fcs3330/fcs3330.htm) or in pdf form  
[www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/fcs3/fcs3330/fcs3330/pdf](http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/fcs3/fcs3330/fcs3330/pdf)

Let’s Preserve fact sheets. A series of food preservation fact sheets on specific fruits and vegetables. Call your local Penn State Cooperative Extension office for these free fact sheets.

### **Pressure Canner Checks**

Just a reminder that you may have your pressure canner lid checked on Wednesdays between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. through August at the Lancaster County extension office. Residents of other counties should contact their extension office for times.

Also, Martha will be available to answer questions on Wednesday mornings at 717-394-6851.



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