



Let's Preserve Newsletter

Lancaster County

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Dear Food Preserver:

The rainy season has put a damper on many gardens. Hopefully you have been able to obtain a good supply of quality produce for your use now and for preserving.

One of our family traditions is picking cherries at a pick-your-own orchard each year. Another family favorite is apricots. Besides the frozen fruit, the homemade jams and pies are eagerly looked forward to. When making a pie, I often make an extra for the freezer.

One of the reasons many people preserve their own produce is to control the additives. We receive lots of requests for recipes for special diets and are even offering a workshop on the topic in July.

Herbs, as in the corn recipe in this newsletter, are a good flavor substitute for salt. Because herbs are low acid, be sure you are using a tested recipe when adding them to vegetables for canning.

Happy food preserving.

Sincerely,

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Feature Food of the Month

This pie recipe makes two nine-inch pies. Bake one fresh and freeze the extra pie filling. If you don't care for the skin on the apricots, dip the apricots in rapidly boiling water for 30 seconds, chill, and slip off the skin. Skinned apricots will be more juicy when you prepare the mixture. I've tried them both ways.

Fresh Apricot Pies

- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 10 cups sliced fresh apricots (4 pounds)
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/4 cup quick-cooking tapioca
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- Double crust pastry for 9-inch pie(s)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- Cream or beaten egg

Sprinkle lemon juice over apricots. Blend sugar, tapioca, and cinnamon and stir into apricots; mix lightly. Let stand 15 minutes.

Pour half of apricot filling into unbaked 9-inch pie shell; dot with 1 tablespoon butter. Add top pastry, flute edge of crust. Brush top pastry with beaten egg or cream. Bake at 425°F for 40 minutes or until fruit in center of pie is cooked.

To Freeze Extra Pie Filling: place half of filling in large freezer bag, dot with one tablespoon butter. Squeeze out air and seal. Place in 9-inch pie pan; shape to fit pan and freeze. Once frozen, remove pan.

To Bake Frozen Pie Filling: unwrap and place frozen filling in unbaked 9-inch pie shell. Add top pastry, flute edge of crust. Brush with cream or beaten egg. Bake at 425°F for 60 to 70 minutes. (Adapted from California Fresh Apricot Council)

With a few changes the frozen filling can also be used for a crisp or a cobbler. If you want to make a cobbler with the filling, bake the filling until hot before adding the biscuit topper or the dough will be done before the filling is thickened and the tapioca tender. To make a crisp, reduce the sugar in the filling by half because the crumb topping will provide the additional sugar needed for sweetness. I topped the frozen filling with my favorite crisp recipe (1 cup quick oats, 1/3 cup flour, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/2 tsp. salt, 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, and 1/3 cup melted butter or oil) and baked it at 375°F for 60 minutes.

Freezing Apricots

The California Fresh Apricot Council recommends freezing apricots in a medium syrup made from 2 cups sugar and 5 cups water. Adding 3/4 teaspoon ascorbic acid to each quart of syrup will improve the quality of the product. Plunge the whole apricots into boiling water for about thirty seconds, then peel, pit, halve or slice.

If apricots are not peeled, heat them in boiling water 1/2 minute to keep skins from toughening during freezing. Cool in cold water and drain. Allow adequate head space for expansion of the syrup as it freezes—3/4 inch for pints in containers with a narrow opening, 1/2 inch in containers with wide top opening—double those amounts for quarts.

Pies

Freezing Pies

Why freeze pies? It saves time but seems like an energy waste.



Frozen pies do take longer to bake than fresh made and they should be baked from the frozen state. It does save preparation time. Because freezing a pie in a pie pan takes lots of space and ties up the use of that pan, it would be more efficient to freeze the pre-measured fruit filling for one pie in a large freezer bag. Dot with butter, if desired; squeeze out the air, and seal. Place it into the pie pan shaping it to fit the pan and then freeze until solid. When it is frozen, remove it from the pan. This way you can continue to use the pie pan and yet have everything mixed ahead to put into fresh pie dough. When you are ready to use the pie, place the frozen filling in an unbaked pie shell, top, and bake. Allow an extra 20-25 minutes baking time.

Pre-baked pies will keep longer than unbaked ones, but they will not have that fresh baked aroma or crispness. Pumpkin pies are best frozen unbaked. Custard pies do not freeze well. Cream-type pies usually get grainy and watery.

Recommended Storage Times for Pies:*

Pie dough unbaked	1½– 2 months
Pie Dough Baked	2 - 3 months
Unbaked Fruit Pies	3 - 4 months
Baked Fruit Pies	6 – 8 months
Fruit Pie Fillings	6 – 8 months
Chiffon pies (gelatin base)	2 weeks
Unbaked Pumpkin Pie	4 – 5 weeks

* Different sources give different storage times. Pies stored longer than the storage times listed here should be safe but may be of less acceptable quality.

Do-It-Yourself Sour Cherries

Water packed sour cherries are selling for \$2.89 per can. Why not pick your own

Montmorency cherries locally and can them in water? Pit the

cherries, place in an ascorbic acid solution to prevent stem end discoloration, drain, pack into hot jars and fill with boiling water to within 1/2 inch of the top of the jar. Process raw pack pints or quarts for 25 minutes in boiling water. You may also can them in a light or medium sugar syrup. To freeze cherries, pit and package with or without sugar. Keep track of the amount of sugar used and write it on the label.

Subtract that amount of sugar from the recipe you use to prepare the cherries. Your home preserved cherries can be used for a variety of desserts and the unsweetened frozen ones can be made into jams.



Pitting Pointers

Wash cherries thoroughly before pitting. Chilled cherries will hold their juice more than warm cherries. You can remove the pits with a cherry pitter which you can purchase or with a sterilized hair pin or paper clip bent to do the job of snaring the pit. Just squeezing the cherries to pop the pits out will cause you to lose excess juice.

Jars

Jars are Important to Success

Jars recommended for home canning are “Mason-type” jars which are made of tempered glass to withstand changes during processing, especially pressure processing. The top rims of canning jars are designed to provide a sealing surface wide enough to accommodate a self-sealing lid. The neck of the mason jar is made to allow you to tighten the screw bands enough to obtain a proper seal. Jars made for commercial food production can be used for canning acid foods in the boiling water bath but expect some breakage. Commercial food jars are not recommended for use in a pressure canner because they are more likely to break at the high temperatures in the pressure canner.

Jars should be free of all cracks and chips. Even very fine, hairline cracks indicate a weakness in the jar. This means the jar is likely to break in the canner. Carefully examine the sealing surface of each jar for nicks, scratches or other defects by holding the jar at eye level and running your finger over the entire sealing surface. If there is any kind of bump or depression on the top sealing edge of the jar, the jar probably won't seal.

Make sure there are no cloudy scales or white deposits on the inside of jars because very heat-resistant forms of bacteria can be buried under them. If not removed, these bacterial forms could cause food spoilage in that jar. Although such deposits are difficult to clean, you can remove them by applying undiluted vinegar to the inside surface. After 2 to 3 hours, scrub the inside of the jar with a stiff brush or nylon net-type scouring pad—NOT metal as this type will scratch the jar.

Sealing Problems

When jars fail to seal from the very beginning, right after being processed, the fault usually lies with the way the lid and jar come together. The jar may be cracked or have a bump on the top edge or a dent on the edge. There may be a gap in the sealant on the lid. If it's not a canning jar, the screw band may not have fit the threads of the jar

right. There may be a bit of food trapped between the lid and jar because you didn't wipe it off before applying the lid or there was liquid lost from the jar during processing and a food fiber got trapped under the lid.

Jars that are sealed at the time of processing and then lose seal a few weeks later were either processed incorrectly or not sufficiently processed so that bacteria are able to grow or the food is fermenting.

Appliances

Range Care When Canning

Heat build-up between the canner and the range top can be sufficient to cause trim rims to discolor or even to crack the enamel on the range top. Here are suggestions to reduce these problems.



If you have an electric range, choose a canner with a flat bottom so that heat is conducted efficiently. A gas range works well with either a flat bottom or a rippled bottom canner.

Dark material such as blue speckled enamel will absorb heat into the pot better than a shiny metal bottom which will reflect heat back down to the range top.

Make sure that the support holding the surface element isn't bent from a heavy load. Replace damaged supports.

If you have two large units, alternate their use when you are canning for a long time to allow the surface to cool.

Do not wipe very hot surfaces with a wet cloth. This can cause porcelain cracks.

Do not close off air circulation in the drip bowl by covering the hole with aluminum foil.

After the water is boiling, you do not need to have the unit on high all the time. Experiment to see how low you can turn the burner to maintain a boil or proper pressure.

Flat top or glass top ranges are not suitable for canning.

Invest in a specially designed canner burner that raises the surface unit above the range surface and provides stronger support. It is available for several models of electric ranges; ask your appliance dealer if one is available for your brand of electric range.

Upright Freezer Caution

It is frustrating to lose good food because the freezer door was accidentally left open. Close the door slowly but firmly. When you quickly close a freezer door with a magnetic closure, it will often bounce and stop in the slightly open position. This is enough to cause the entire contents to thaw. Be especially careful if your freezer is in an out-of-the-way location where you may not notice the problem.

Corn

Cream Style vs. Whole Kernel Corn

Corn will soon be available in adequate quantities for preservation. Just a reminder that corn is a low acid food that requires processing in a pressure canner for safety. In the following recipe, or any whole kernel corn recipe, cut the corn from the cob at about three-fourths the depth of the kernel. Do not scrape the cob because this will introduce starch into the liquid surrounding the kernel of corn and increase the density of the liquid affecting the heat penetration of the corn in the center of the jar. (To make cream style corn, you do scrap the cob to obtain all the milky liquid. However, cream style corn requires a much longer processing time and should never be canned in jars larger than one pint so that heat can penetrate to the center adequately.)



Because corn is one of the more dense foods, pack it loosely into the jars and allow one inch of headspace. Process whole kernel corn at 11 pounds pressure in a dial gauge pressure canner or 10 pounds in a weighted gauge pressure canner for 55 minutes for pints, 85 minutes for quarts. (Adjust for higher altitudes.) Process cream style corn only in pints or smaller for 85 minutes.

For lots of flavor without the addition of salt try this recipe for canning corn.

Corn and Red Peppers with Basil

15 pounds corn-on-the cob

1 pound red peppers (about 3 medium)

Basil

Cut corn from cob. Cut red peppers into strips. Pack corn loosely into hot pint jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. Add 3 to 4 strips of red pepper and 1/2 teaspoon basil to each jar. Ladle boiling water over corn, leaving 1-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Adjust two-piece caps. Process pints 55 minutes at 10 pounds pressure in a weighted canner or 11 pounds pressure in a dial gauge canner. Yield: about 6 pints. (Source: *The Ball Blue Book*)

Resources

California Fresh Apricot Council:

www.califapricot.com

Questions: Call Penn State Cooperative Extension—Lancaster County 394-6851—Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Pressure canner checks for dial gauges continue to be available Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Let's Preserve fact sheets are being revised.

These fact sheets on specific fruits and vegetables will be available later this Summer. Call your local Penn State Cooperative Extension office for these fact sheets.

Where trade names appear, no discrimination is intended, and no endorsement by Penn State Cooperative Extension is implied.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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