



Let's Preserve Newsletter

Lancaster County

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August 2005

Dear Food Preserver,

August—what a bountiful month! The peppers are hanging full of fruit. Onions have been dug. At this point, Martha has enough green beans preserved that the extra are being shared with neighbors. One of our friends gives his excess produce to the homeless shelter and the food bank. In a few weeks, we are looking forward to combining the end of the garden harvest into chow-chow.

Nancy feels one of the nicest pleasures of having a garden is to go out and pick a juicy ripe tomato for lunch. She likes to individually quick freeze chopped peppers to sprinkle on pizza, put in soups, and toss in stir-fries. They are very convenient.

This month's newsletter features some of the basic foods. Hopefully, you are enjoying a good harvest and happy times preserving.

Nancy Wiker

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 Penn State Cooperative Extension

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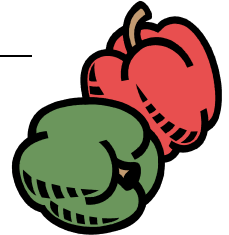
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Featured Food of the Month – Peppers

Green Pepper Jelly

- 4 or 5 hot peppers, cored and cut in pieces
- 4 sweet green peppers, cored and cut in pieces
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 5 cups sugar
- 1 pouch liquid pectin
- Green food coloring

Sterilize canning jars. Put half the peppers and half the vinegar into blender container; cover, and process at liquefy until pepper is liquefied. Repeat with remaining peppers and vinegar. Combine liquefied peppers/vinegar and sugar in a large saucepot and boil slowly for 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Add liquid pectin, return to heat and boil hard 1 minute. Skim and add a few drops of green food coloring, if desired. Pour jelly immediately into hot canning

jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water bath. Makes 5 half-pint jars.

Source: So Easy to Preserve

Caution: The volatile oils in hot peppers can cause burns. When working with hot peppers it is advisable to wear gloves. Do not touch eyes with contaminated hands.

Freezing Peppers

Bell and other sweet peppers can be frozen blanched or raw. Blanched peppers are good for use in cooking. To blanch peppers, cut washed and seeded peppers into ½ inch strips or rings and blanch for 2 minutes. Blanch halves for 3 minutes. Cool quickly, drain, and package leaving ½ inch headspace. Peppers can also be chopped or sliced and frozen raw. Because of the air space between the crisp pieces, no headspace is needed. Portions to be used at one time can be wrapped in plastic wrap, and then the individual packets can be put into a plastic freezer box. When larger quantities are done at one time, put plastic wrap in the top of the container to prevent exposure to the air. Peppers frozen without blanching are good to use in uncooked foods because they have a crisper texture.

Roasted Peppers

Roasted peppers can be prepared in advance and canned or frozen. Small peppers may be left whole. Cut large peppers into quarters and remove cores and seeds. Slash two or four slits in each pepper and place in a 400°F oven or under the broiler for 6 to 8 minutes until skins blister. Cool peppers in water and slip off skins. Flatten small whole peppers to remove air

Covering roasted peppers in oil and storing them at room temperature is not a safe practice. It can lead to botulism.

Canning Peppers

Pickled or marinated peppers that have adequate vinegar to provide acidity can safely be processed in a boiling water bath. Other peppers must be processed as a low acid food in a pressure canner.

Note that marinated peppers are canned in an oil-vinegar solution. Because the oil in a closed jar at room temperature is a good host for dangerous bacteria, additional acidity must be provided. The USDA recipe adds bottled lemon juice as well as vinegar. It is also necessary to make sure the oil/pickling solution is well mixed and evenly distributed between the jars.

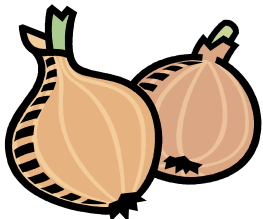
It is a misconception that the hotter the pepper, the more acidic it is. The hotness of a pepper depends on the amount of capsaicin it contains and not on the level of acidity. All peppers are classified as low-acid foods.

Too Much Heat

One variety of pepper can be substituted for another in a recipe. For safety, keep the total amount the same. It is safe to reduce the amount of a low acid vegetable such as a pepper or onion in a pickle or relish recipe, but never add more in relation to the amount of pickling solution.

Onions

Harvesting, Curing, and Storing



Harvest onions when the tops have fallen over and dried. On sunny breezy days, onions may be pulled and left in the garden a day or two to dry before they are taken to a curing area. Curing must take place for the onions to be stored for any length of time. Cure onions by placing them in a warm, well ventilated area until the necks are thoroughly dry. With warm temperatures, good air circulation and low humidity, curing should be completed within two weeks after harvest. Onions are best stored in a cool, moderately dry area in ventilated containers. Source: Growing Onions in the Home Garden, Ohio State University.

Besides mesh bags, here's a unique method to store onions. Cut off the top of a clean pair of pantyhose, drop an onion into one leg, tie a knot in the hose, and add more onions in the same way. Hang in a cool, dry place. Simply cut off an onion when needed. Do not store onions in a

plastic bag because the trapped moisture will cause them to mold.

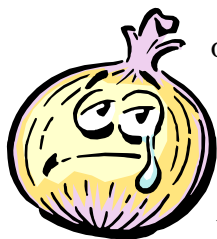
Avoid storing onions near potatoes because the moisture from the onions will cause the potatoes to spoil.

Storing Cut Onions: The best storage container for cut onions is an airtight screw-top glass jar. It will hold the odors inside the jar. Refrigerate for up to one week or freeze. However, when chopped in advance and refrigerated, onions do lose flavor due to oxidation.

Onion Equivalents:

Fresh onions: 1 pound = 4 medium,
3 ½ to 4 cups chopped
1 medium onion = ¾ to 1 cup chopped
1 medium onion = 1 tablespoon onion powder
Frozen onions: 12 ounces = 3 cups chopped

Onion Tears



Sulfuric compounds in the onion are the culprits that affect our senses. Reduce tearing when cutting onions by first chilling the onions for 30 minutes. Cut off the top and peel the outer layers leaving the root end intact.

The root end has the largest concentration of sulfuric compounds that make your eyes tear.

Other suggestions for chopping: Brush the cutting board with distilled white vinegar before chopping onions.

Turn on the stovetop exhaust fan and chop on a cutting board near the stove.

The sharper your knife and the quicker you chop, the fewer the tears.

Here's another quick chop option when chopping by hand—cut the onion in half from the top to the root. Place the halves cut side down, then cut into parallel vertical slices. Holding the slices together, slice crosswise to your original cuts.

Onion Scented Hands:

Rub them with lemon juice. Also try parsley, salt, or vinegar.



Try lemon juice to remove odors from cooking equipment and storage containers.

To diminish the lingering onion smell in a kitchen, simmer 4 cups water, 1 cup vinegar, and 1 teaspoon ground cloves in a large pot for 15 minutes.

“Sweet” Sweet Corn

New varieties of sweet corn, sometimes referred to as supersweet corn, contain more natural sugars than traditional varieties. This is a plus for reducing enzymatic activity and improving keeping quality. As a result, some people find that they can freeze the supersweet corn for several months without blanching it and still have an acceptable product. For longer storage, it is still best to blanch the corn. Less sweet varieties should be blanched.



There is a negative side to supersweet corn when it comes to canning. The extra sugar makes it difficult to prevent caramelization during the long processing time in the pressure canner. The corn turns dark in color and takes on a caramelized flavor. This is more noticeable in canned cream style corn than in whole kernel corn because of the extra time needed to process the cream style corn.

Pressure Canner Replacement Parts

Is the gasket on your pressure canner lid brittle? Does the pressure release valve need replacing? Did your dial gauge test indicate you need a new dial gauge? Some replacement parts are available locally where pressure canners are sold. Larger hardware stores and general merchandise stores are likely to have a greater selection of parts. If you can't find parts locally, contact these numbers for sources. Have the model number available when seeking parts.

Mirro Aluminum Company
Manitowoc, WI 54220
Phone: (800-527-7727)

Mirro® does not sell replacement parts to the individual consumer. Parts are available through

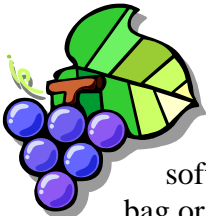
Cook's Corner in Manitowoc, WI.
Phone: 1-800-236-2433
Website: www.cookscorner.com

Presto Service Department
National Presto Industries, Inc.
3925 North Hastings Way
Eau Claire, WI 54703-2209
Phone: 1-800-877-0441
Website: <http://www.gopresto.com>

Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry Co. Inc.
(Manufacturer of All American Canner)
PO Box 246
838 South 16th Street
Manitowoc, WI 54221-0246
Phone: 1-920-682-8627
Website: <https://store.wafco.com>

Some older canners are no longer manufactured, and no parts or service are available for these canners.

Grape Juice



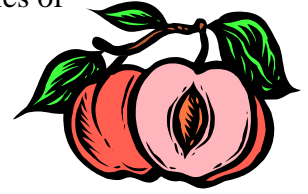
Place washed and stemmed grapes in a saucepan and cover with boiling water. Heat and simmer slowly until skins are soft. Strain through a damp jelly bag or double layers of cheesecloth. Refrigerate juice for 24 to 48 hours to allow sediment to settle. Without mixing, carefully pour off juice and save clear liquid. Discard sediment. If desired, strain through a paper coffee filter for a clearer juice. Place juice in a saucepan. Sweeten juice to taste, if desired. Heat, stirring until juice begins to boil. Pour into sterilized pint or quart jars leaving ¼ inch headspace. Process in a boiling water bath for 5 minutes. Note: Because of the short processing time, jars need to be sterilized before being filled.

Peaches

There's no need to tuck your favorite peach recipes away when summer comes to an end.

Frozen peaches can be substituted for fresh peaches in most recipes. They are handy for making baked pies, cobblers, and crisps. The added sugar needed to preserve the firm texture of the peach becomes part of the sweetener in the dessert.

There are two categories of peaches—clingstone and freestone. This describes the ease with which the edible portion pulls away from the pit. Freestone varieties are much nicer when you need to peel a large amount for canning or freezing.



To retard darkening of the peaches during storage, sprinkle ascorbic acid dissolved in water over the peaches before adding the sugar. Use ¼ teaspoon (750 mg) ascorbic acid in 3 tablespoons cold water to each quart of fruit. Follow directions on the package if using a commercial ascorbic acid mixture. Then add 2/3 cup sugar to each quart prepared fruit. Stir gently and let stand for 15 minutes. Caution: Allow headspace for expansion or the syrup will spill over containers making a sticky mess.

To eat frozen peaches raw, partially thaw and enjoy with some ice crystals. They will taste like a slushy. They are also good over cereal, ice cream, or angel food cake.

Peaches are one of the favorite fruits to can. Siphoning is one of the main problems in canning peaches. Loss of liquid after processing results in lost flavor and increased air space. Excess air space provides more oxygen that causes the peaches to darken. To overcome siphoning, try hot packing. Hot packing removes air from the peach's cells reducing air inside the jar. Heat drained fruit in syrup, water, or juice. Bring the peaches to a boil. Pack both the peaches and the hot liquid into jars. Process pints 20 minutes and quarts 25 minutes in a boiling water bath. (Raw packed peaches require 5 minutes longer processing time.) Remove the canner lid and allow the jars to sit in the hot water 5 minutes before removing from the canner.

When fruit is lighter than syrup, peaches will float in the jar. The Ball Blue Book® recommends using a light to medium syrup to reduce floating.

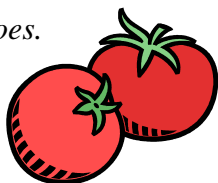
Commercial Fruit Preservers

More and more products to preserve the color of fresh fruits and prevent browning are available in the market. They vary in price and ingredients. The common ingredient to each is ascorbic acid. Sugar or dextrose is used as a carrier and some form of anti-caking ingredient is included. The major difference is the amount of ascorbic acid in each. Read the nutrient label to determine the amount of vitamin C present—larger amounts mean more ascorbic acid.

Tasty Tomatoes

We have lots of yellow tomatoes. How should they be canned?

Follow the same directions as for canning regular tomatoes. Remember to acidify the product by adding 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice per quart.



Is it safe to can green tomatoes? Green tomatoes are more acidic than ripened fruit and can be canned safely if USDA recipes are followed.

The vines on my tomato plants have dried but the tomatoes look fine. Can the tomatoes still be used? Choose only disease-free, vine ripened, firm fruit for canning. Tomatoes from blighted, dead or frost-killed vines may be lower in acidity and are more likely to carry bacteria.

Why do the tomatoes I've frozen seem tough? The enzymes that cause the fruit to ripen continue to be active causing changes in texture as well as flavor and color. Raw tomatoes become limp, the skins become paper-like, and the quality is poor. Removing skins and cooking tomatoes before freezing them improves the quality. When thawed, they are suitable for use in cooked dishes.

Space saving idea: Cook tomatoes down to make tomato sauce to save space in the freezer. Wash, core, quarter and seed tomatoes.

Cook until soft, stirring to prevent sticking. Puree in food processor or food mill. Return to heat and simmer until reduced by half. Cool and freeze. Seasonings may be added before or after freezing the sauce. See the chart below.

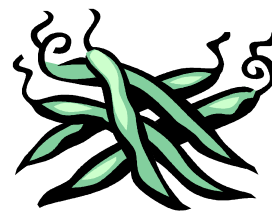
Effect of Freezing on Spices and Seasonings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pepper, cloves, garlic, green pepper, imitation vanilla and some herbs tend to get strong and bitter.• Onion and paprika change flavor during freezing.• Celery seasonings become stronger.• Curry may develop a musty off-flavor.• Salt loses flavor and has the tendency to increase rancidity in any item containing fat.• When using seasonings and spices, season lightly before freezing, and add additional seasonings when reheating or serving.
Source: So Easy to Preserve: Elizabeth Andress, University of Georgia

Questions

How can I freeze green beans without the beans becoming rubbery?

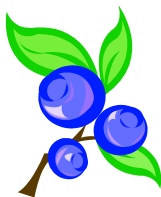
Proper blanching, cooling, and packaging are the secrets to successful freezing.

Beans need to be blanched long enough to stop enzyme reactions—2 minutes for small beans, 3 minutes for large beans. Start counting blanching time after the water returns to a boil. Only blanch one quart of beans in a gallon of rapidly boiling water. Then cool them quickly in water below 60°F. Using ice water is even better. Change the water several times so the interior of the bean chills. The outside of the bean might feel cool while the interior is still warm. It takes at least as long to chill the beans as it does to blanch them. Then drain thoroughly, package, and freeze quickly. Slow freezing causes large ice crystals that break cell walls down, making the product soft.



Is it safe to refreeze raw meat and poultry that has thawed? According to the USDA, meat and poultry which has been defrosted in the refrigerator may be refrozen before or after cooking. It should be refrozen shortly after it was thawed. If thawed by other methods, cook the meat before refreezing it. Do not thaw meat at room temperature such as on the kitchen counter. The loss of moisture during thawing may cause some quality loss when the meat is refrozen.

Is it safe to use blueberries that have been frozen more than one year? The best guideline is to freeze the amount that will be used within one year. This maintains the highest quality. Properly frozen berries will be safe to use for longer periods of time, but signs of quality deterioration such as freezer burn and textural changes will begin to show.



Resources

Let's Preserve Peppers—includes canning and freezing information and recipes. Available from the cooperative extension office.



About Onions: www.onions-usa.org/about

National Center for Home Food Preservation:
www.uga.edu/nchfp/

More Food Preservation Workshops

Totally Tomatoes

Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2005

Time: 7:00-8:30 p.m. **or**

Date: Thursday, September 1, 2005

Time: 10:00-11:30 a.m.

3-C's: Chutneys, Chow-Chow, and Chowder

Date: Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Times: 10:00-12:00 noon **or**

7:00-9:00 p.m.

Sauerkraut

Guest teacher: Debbie Hartman (Lebanon County Master Gardener)

Date: Monday, October 24, 2005

Time: 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Winter Potpourri

Date: Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Times: 10:00-12:00 noon **or**

7:00-9:00 p.m.

All food preservation classes will be held at the Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster. Contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office at 717-394-6851 to register. There is a fee of \$7.50 per class.



Penn State encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact Nancy Wiker at 717-394-6851 in advance of your participation or visit.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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