



Let's Preserve Newsletter

Lancaster County

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Dear Home Food Preserver,

As things slow down in the fall, our food preservation activities seem more creative. This is the time of year, we are more likely to dry apples and pears, prepare some fun jams, and make food gifts for the holidays. As we get into winter, you may find us canning the more time consuming soups and meats. We like to can soup because we can control the amount of salt that goes into it. Having some jars of canned meat on hand is great for quick meals such as tacos, fajitas, and creamed chicken on waffles. Some of you with hunters in the family may want to try canning venison.

This is the last *Let's Preserve* for the 2006 year. We hope you have found some food preservation ideas you can use.

Sincerely,

Nancy R. Wiker

Nancy R. Wiker, Extension Educator – FCS
 Penn State Cooperative Extension

Martha Zepp

Martha Zepp, Food Preservation Consultant
 Penn State Cooperative Extension

Artic Pops

Treat the children to a nutritious frozen snack. Pour applesauce into freezer pop forms and freeze for at least two hours. Mix in maple syrup, cinnamon, berries or granola for variety.



What's Inside...

Food of the Month: Pears

- Tutti-Frutti Jam
- Which Pear
- Mixing Flavors
- What's an Asian Pear?

Apple Harvest

- Apple Ambler
- Apple Smiles

Drying Apples and Pears

Ascorbic vs. Citric Acid

Canning on Smooth Cooktops

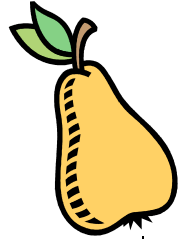
Label Jars Smart

Where to Store Canned Goods

Canning Soups

- Vegetable Soup
- Spicy Vegetable Soup

Resources



Food of the Month – Pears

Citrus and pineapple add zest to bland pears. Colorful maraschino cherries make this a superb spread for use at the holidays or to give as a hostess gift.

Tutti-Frutti Jam

- 3 cups chopped or ground pears (about 2 pounds pears)
- 1 large orange
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup drained crushed pineapple
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped maraschino cherries (3 ounce bottle)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon butter or margarine (optional)
- 1 package powdered pectin
- 5 cups sugar

Sterilize canning jars and prepare two-piece canning lids according to manufacturer's directions. Measure sugar into a separate bowl.

To prepare fruit. Sort and wash ripe pears; pare and core. Chop or grind pears. Peel orange, remove seeds and chop or grind pulp.

To make jam. Measure chopped pears into a large kettle. Add orange, pineapple, cherries, and lemon juice. (1/2 teaspoon butter or margarine may be added to reduce foaming.) Stir in pectin. Place on high heat and, stirring constantly, bring quickly to a full boil with bubbles over the entire surface. Add sugar, continue stirring, and heat again to full bubbling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat; skim.

Fill hot jam immediately into hot, sterile jars, leaving 1/4 inch headspace. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel; adjust two-piece metal canning lids. Process in a boiling water bath for 5 minutes. Makes 6 or 7 half-pint jars.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation

Which Pear?

While there are hundreds of varieties of pears, only a few are produced commercially.

The most popular is the Bartlett available in the summer and early fall. Anjou, Bosc, and Comice ripen in the fall and winter. The most common canning pears are Bartlett and Bosc. Seckel are small pears often pickled whole. Local fruit stands may carry some equally good varieties suitable for canning.



Pears are harvested when they reach full maturity but before they are ripe. Pears ripen in several weeks at room temperature. Test for ripeness by pressing gently near the stem to see if it gives to gentle pressure. Waiting until pears are soft around the middle may indicate over ripeness. Once ripened, pears should be stored in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Pears are an ethylene producer; so avoid storing them with ethylene sensitive produce.

If you buy pears green, you can store them in the refrigerator to slow ripening. Remove them from the refrigerator a couple of days before use. Fruit ripens faster in a paper bag or perforated plastic bag. Never store or ripen pears in a sealed plastic bag because the fruit will turn brown in the center.

Mixing Flavors

If you think about the blend of flavors in a fruit salad, you might like pears canned in fruit juice instead of sugar syrup. Simply boil peeled pear halves or quarters in apple or pineapple juice for 5 minutes, pack into hot jars, and process pints for 20 minutes and quarts for 25 minutes in a boiling water bath. A hot pack gives the best quality product for pears.

What's an Asian Pear?

Sometimes called a pear apple, they have the shape of an apple and the rich golden color of a pear. They are crisp like an apple, juicy like a pear and have more of a pear flavor. Originally produced in western orchards, they are now available at some Pennsylvania fruit stands. These pears ripen on the tree. Asian pears are selected by smell (a strong, sweet aroma) rather than firmness. Unlike other pears that yield to gentle pressure when ripe, Asian pears are ripe even when they are extremely firm. Use Asian pears spiced with a dash of cinnamon to make a delicious spread using one of the new freezer jam pectins.

Apple Harvest

This recipe has the flavor of apple pie filling without the crust or thickener. Adding sugar before cooking helps to maintain the shape of the apple slices. Lemon juice keeps the apples white and provides good flavor. Extras can be frozen.



Apple Ambler

4 to 5 large tart apples
1/2 cup sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
cinnamon or nutmeg (optional)
butter (optional)

Pour ¼ inch water in the bottom of a casserole. Thinly slice apples into casserole. Sprinkle sugar generously between layers of apples. Fill casserole to within 1 inch of top. Sprinkle with lemon juice. Dot with bits of butter and sprinkle with nutmeg if desired. Cover and bake at 350°F 30 minutes or until tender.

Microwave directions: Cook on high approximately 8 minutes. Stir halfway through cooking time. Watch to avoid boil out; reduce the power level if necessary.

Serve warm or cold.

A handful of cranberries can be added to the apples for a seasonal taste treat.

Apple Smiles

This little narrative featuring apples was posted on an exhibit at the 2006 Philadelphia Flower Show by the Old Eagle Garden Club. “After a whirlwind holiday in Rome, Granny Smith and her son Jonathan were happy to return to the Empire state at a more leisurely pace. They took time to savor a *Delicious* bite at the Big Apple.” Have fun creating your own apple stories with some of the other varieties of apples.



Drying Apples and Pears

Dried apples and pears make excellent snacks. They may be peeled or unpeeled, but peeled fruit will dry more quickly. Apple and pear slices can be dried in a dehydrator or oven (if you can set your oven at 150°F or lower.) Soak freshly cut slices for 15 minutes in a solution containing 2 teaspoons of ascorbic acid crystals per 2 cups of water. A solution of 1 part lemon juice to 1 part water can be substituted for the ascorbic acid solution. Both pre-treatments help preserve color and improve vitamin C content. The process also acts as an antimicrobial agent against E. coli bacteria. Dry at 135 to 145°F for 6 to 12 hours. Pears may take longer. Apples and pears will be leathery when dry. To test dryness, tear a cooled, dried slice apart, press between your fingers. If no beads of moisture form, the fruit should be dry enough. Condition the dried fruit by packing it loosely into an air

tight glass or plastic container for several days to distribute the remaining moisture evenly. Properly dried fruit can be safely stored at room temperature but will maintain its quality for a longer period of time if stored in the freezer.

Ascorbic vs. Citric Acid

Many people are confused by these two ingredients that play important, but very different, roles in food preservation.

Ascorbic acid is the one most frequently used to prevent discoloration in most fruits. Ascorbic acid is vitamin C. Not only does it preserve the natural color of fruits, but it adds nutritive value as well. It is available in powdered form but is more readily available as ascorbic acid tablets sold as vitamin C. The tablets need to be crushed before use. Fillers in the tablets may make the syrup cloudy, but they are not harmful. Try to get vitamin C tablets without other additives. One-half teaspoon powdered ascorbic acid equals 1500 mg. Before freezing fruit, ascorbic acid is added to the syrup, the sugar, or directly to the fruit. Ascorbic acid is also added to the water for light colored peeled fruits while waiting for the canning process. Citric acid or lemon juice is sometimes used in place of ascorbic acid to prevent discoloration. Neither is as effective for this purpose as ascorbic acid.

There are commercially prepared anti-darkening products that contain ascorbic acid as the active ingredient. Examples are Fruit Fresh® and SureJell Ever Fresh®. Follow the manufacturer’s directions for their use. The amount of a commercially prepared anti-darkening product to use differs from pure powdered ascorbic acid or vitamin C.

Citric acid or bottled lemon juice is added to canned tomatoes to increase the acidity of the tomatoes to make them safe for processing in the boiling water bath. Even processing times for pressure canning tomatoes are based on the addition of citric acid or lemon juice to increase the acidity of the tomatoes.

Generally bottled lemon juice found in the juice section of the grocery store is more readily available than powdered citric acid. A few health food stores do sell small bottles of pure citric acid for food preservation. Mrs. Wages® now has small containers of citric acid powder available for less than \$3.00 at some stores and fruit markets that sell canning supplies. Use 1 tablespoon of bottled lemon juice per pint or 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice per quart of tomatoes. Put it in the bottom of the jar before adding the tomatoes. If using citric acid crystals, use ¼ teaspoon per pint or ½ teaspoon per quart. Do not use ascorbic acid or commercial anti-darkening agents to acidity tomatoes. Ascorbic acid does not contain enough acid to change the pH of the tomatoes to make them a high acid food.

Canning on Smooth Cooktops

We have had questions about the safety of canning on smooth cooktops. This week the National Center for Home Food Preservation posted an article on this topic. Follow manufacturer's advice because styles of smooth cooktops differ in ways that influence their suitability for canning. Some manufacturers say do not can on them. Other manufacturers say it is okay to can on them but put stipulations on the diameter of the canner compared to the diameter of the burner. NCHFP identifies several issues:

1. There can be damage to the cooktop from the excessive heat that reflects back down on the surface, especially if the canners used are larger in diameter than is intended for the burner being used. This damage includes discoloration of white tops, actual burner damage, cracking of the glass tops, and/or fusion of the metal to the glass top. Even if a manufacturer says a burner/ cooktop can be used for canning, be aware that scratching can occur if the aluminum canner is slid or pulled across the cooktop which often happens with large, heavy filled canners.
2. Many of these cooktops have automatic cut-offs on their burners when heat gets

excessive. If that option is built in, and the burner under a canner shuts off during the process time, then the product will be underprocessed and cannot be salvaged as a canned food. The process time must be continuous at the intended temperature, or microorganisms may survive.

3. Many canners do not have flat enough bottoms to work well on a smooth cooktop to be able to maintain a full boil over the tops of the jars. It may be necessary to create your own canner out of a flat-bottomed stockpot with a bottom rack inserted. The pot must be large enough to have lots of water boiling freely around the jars, and at least 1 inch over the tops of jars.

Contact the manufacturer of your smooth cooktop before making a decision as to whether or not to can on it. They are the recommended source of this information and may also have up-to-date alternatives or suggestions for equipment that you can use. Make sure they understand how large your boiling water or pressure canner is, how long it must be heated at high heat, how long the hot canner may stay on the burner until it cools after the process time, and that the canner is made from aluminum (if it is.)

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation
August 25, 2006

Label Jars Smart

When all the peaches were the same variety and all were raw packed in the boiling water bath, 2006 seemed a suitable label. After all, we could tell they were peaches by their appearance. The more canning I do, the more information I find useful on the label. Complete labels help me compare results when different varieties or different canning methods are used.

Sunhigh Peaches
August 10, 2006

Hot Pack
Light Syrup
Boiling Water Bath 20 minutes

I find the following information useful:

- Style of pack—raw or hot pack.
- Form—whole, crushed, juice, etc.
- Type of syrup or liquid added.
- Date jar was processed. If more than one canner load was canned on the same day, indicate the batch in case a spoilage problem turns up later.
- Type and variety of the food.
- Additional information may be useful on specific items. For example, a list of ingredients in a mixed vegetable soup, the type of pectin in a jam or jelly, processing time and method of processing for any product.

Where to Store Canned Goods

Excessive heat, cold, or light causes food to lose quality in a few weeks or months. Light hastens oxidation and destroys some vitamins. In the absence of a closed food cupboard or dark room, store jars in the cartons in which they were purchased.

Clean, Cool, Dark, Dry

The best storage temperature for canned goods is between 50 and 70°F. Foods stored above 70°F will deteriorate more quickly, and jars kept above 95°F will likely spoil. Therefore avoid placing jars near hot pipes, a range or furnace, in an uninsulated attic, or in direct sunlight.

Accidental freezing of canned foods will not cause spoilage unless jars become unsealed. However, food expands when frozen and may break the seal. Freezing and thawing may also soften the food.

Avoid storing jars in a damp basement where moisture can cause jar lids to rust.

It's also helpful to organize items so that older jars are in front where they will be used first.

Canning Soups

Winter is a great time for eating soups. It's also a great time for canning soups. Fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables may be used.

I've used fresh carrots and celery; frozen whole kernel corn, limas, peppers, and peas; and home canned tomato juice. I usually make my own broth when I cook the chicken, but I have used canned broth and sometimes add bouillon cubes in place of salt for added flavor.

First, some don'ts for canning soups. Don't add any noodles or other pasta or rice to home canned soups. Don't add any flour, cornstarch, or other thickeners or milk to home canned soups. That eliminates favorites like chicken noodle, minestrone, or creamed soups for home canning. Do not use cream style corn in home canned soups. If using dried beans or peas, they must be fully rehydrated first. (Refer to the Ball Blue Book® for tested bean soup recipes.) Don't concentrate the soup by filling the jar with solids—allow room in the jar for liquid to transfer heat to the solids—about half solids and half liquid.

Use cooked meats or it will be necessary to use process times for canning meats. Have soup simmering to pack into hot jars.

Now, here is a plus. Most times you must follow an exact recipe for home canning. For vegetable soup, you only need to follow these general guidelines.

Vegetable Soup

Choose your favorite soup ingredients.

Prepare each as you would for a hot pack in canning. *Cooked* meat or poultry can be added, if desired.

Combine ingredients with hot water, tomato juice, or broth.

Do not thicken or add milk.

Add salt to taste, if desired.

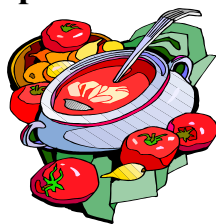
Fill hot jars halfway with solid mixture. Continue filling with hot liquid, leaving 1-inch head space. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process pints for 60 minutes and quarts for 75 minutes in a dial gauge pressure canner at 11 pounds pressure or in a weighted gauge pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure. If cooked seafood is added as part of the solid mixture, increase the processing time for pints and quarts to 100 minutes.



Here is a new recipe from the National Center for Home Food Preservation (also available on the DVD listed at the end of the newsletter.)

Spicy Tomato Vegetable Soup

- 6 cups chopped tomatoes
- 2 cups chopped tomatillos
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1 cup chopped green bell pepper
- ½ cup chopped and seeded hot pepper*
- 6 cups whole kernel corn, uncooked (frozen corn kernels may be used if thawed first)
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon hot pepper sauce
- 5 cups tomato juice
- 2 cups water



**Caution: Wear plastic or rubber gloves and do not touch your face while handling or cutting hot peppers.*

- Wash and rinse canning jars, keep hot until ready to use. Prepare lids according to manufacturer's directions.
- Wash, peel and core tomatoes; chop and measure 6 cups. (To peel tomatoes, place washed tomatoes in boiling water for about 30 to 60 seconds or until skins split; immediately place in cold water and slip off skins.) Remove the husks from tomatillos, wash well and core; chop and measure 2 cups. Peel and wash onions and carrots before slicing or chopping and measuring. Wash peppers, remove seeds and chop before measuring.
- Combine all prepared vegetables with seasonings, tomato juice and water in a 12-quart stockpot. Heat to boiling, then reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
- Fill solids into hot, clean jars, filling each jar about halfway. Cover with remaining liquid, leaving 1-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened, clean paper towel, apply two-piece metal canning lids. Process pints for 60 minutes and quarts for 75 minutes in a dial gauge pressure canner at 11 pounds pressure or

in a weighted gauge pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure.
Yields: about 9 pint jars or 4 to 5 quarts.

Resources

- Lots of information about pears including varieties and recipes can be found at www.usapears.com
- Would you like to see step-by-step instructions for preserving food? The National Center for Home Food Preservation has produced a DVD, *So Easy to Preserve*. It shows canning tomatoes, pressure canning, freezing fruits and vegetables, and drying foods including jerky. It is available for purchase at www.uga.edu/nchfp/. However, we have a copy here at the office that you can borrow. Call ahead to reserve it for a week.
- The 5th edition of the book, *So Easy to Preserve*, was supposed to be available by the end of August. At this writing, it is still not available on the NCHFP web site. If you are interested, wait a few weeks and check the web site or call Martha at the office to see about availability. *So Easy to Preserve* includes USDA tested procedures and is one of the safest resources to use for food preservation.

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.

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