



Let's Preserve Newsletter

Lancaster County

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Dear Home Food Preserver,

The timely rains in July produced bountiful vegetables in our gardens. I have an abundance of green and wax beans canned and frozen. The combination is great for bean salads. Excess cucumbers are being used to test some new freezer pickle recipes. They are quick and easy to prepare. We'll let you know how they hold up for long-term storage next summer.

Mid-August will find us distributing food preservation information at Ag Progress Days at the Penn State Research Farm near State College. This educational event is a show case of scientific updates on family living and agricultural research. Perhaps we will see you there.

As this year's workshops wind down, we are thinking ahead to next year. Let Martha know of specific interests you may have.

Sincerely,

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Food of the Month: Peaches

Oscar Relish

Peaches and tomatoes in this relish combine both sweet and sour. It's very good with roasted or grilled poultry and with broiled fish. Does anyone know the origin of its name?

- 8 cups chopped fresh peaches (about 12 large)
- 8 cups chopped ripe tomatoes (about 12)
- 2 cups diced green sweet peppers (2 large)
- 1 tablespoon red hot pepper, ground (1 pepper)*
- 2 cups ground onions (about 6)
- 4 cups light brown sugar (firmly packed)
- 2 cups cider vinegar
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- 4 tablespoons pickling spices, tied in cheesecloth bag

Peel and pit peaches. Chop into small pieces. Peel and chop tomatoes into ½-inch pieces. Remove stem and seed from peppers and dice into ¼-inch pieces. Peel onions and grind in food chopper. Grind red hot peppers.

Combine all ingredients in 10-quart saucepan. Cook and stir about 1 ½ to 2 hours, until it reaches desired thickness.

Pack into hot jars, leaving ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process 10 minutes in a boiling-water bath.

Variation: Use two small hot peppers if you like a hotter relish. For a milder relish, substitute Tabasco to taste (1/2 to 1 teaspoon) for the peppers.

Yield: about 6 pint jars.

*Wear gloves when handling hot peppers.

Source: So Easy to Preserve

When cooking with vinegar, lemon juice or acid foods, use a stainless steel kettle. Stainless steel prevents leaching of metal into the food and pitting of the container which might occur with other metals, such as aluminum and cast iron.

Floating Peaches

What causes peaches to “float” to the top of the jar? Even when fruit or vegetables are packed tightly into the jars and the air bubbles have been removed, raw packed foods will float. There is air in the tissue of all fruits and vegetables when they are raw. When heated the first time, the air is driven off and the food shrinks. Some foods like peaches, apricots, nectarines, and tomatoes shrink more than others. Maybe you have noticed that when you boil fresh fruits that foam develops. That same thing happens inside a canning jar. If you are using the raw pack method of filling jars, there is no way you can avoid having the food float. Another problem with raw packing is that you lose juice from the jars into the boiling water bath because of the vigorous boiling which happens in the jar. Sometimes tiny food fibers float along with the escaping juices and get lodged between the jar and the sealing compound of the lid causing sealing failure.

Jars will be sticky from the syrup as well. Raw packing is a safe method but results in a poorer product.

Other causes of floating fruit include improper syrup concentrations and jar lids turned too tightly. Heavy sugar syrups will cause fruit to float more than medium or light syrup or juice packs. Jars lids screwed down too tightly will prevent proper venting and may cause fruit to float. Screw bands only comfortably tight—don’t force them.

Canning Peaches With Splenda®--A Research Study

The use of sugar substitutes in home food preservation appeals to those who need to control calories or have health problems such as diabetes. In the past, recommendations were to can fruit in water or fruit juice and add sugar substitutes when serving it because aspartame was not heat stable and saccharin left an aftertaste. Sucralose (Splenda®) shows promise as an alternative for use in home canning.

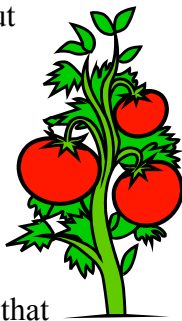


A research study by the University of Georgia compared consumer preferences for peaches canned in water, medium sugar syrup, full-strength medium Splenda® syrup and half-strength medium Splenda® syrup. Overall acceptability was highest for peaches canned in sugar syrup followed by full-strength Splenda. Full-strength Splenda rated higher than half-strength Splenda on appearance, color, aroma, flavor, and texture while the half-strength product scored higher on tartness and sweetness. The study concluded that both full-strength medium Splenda® syrup and half-strength medium Splenda® syrup are suitable for use in home canning peaches. Peaches canned with Splenda® using the USDA canning instructions for peaches retain quality and shelf life for at least one year when stored between 50-70°F in a dry place away from strong light.

Source: Report of E.M.D’Sa and E. L. Address, Dept. of Foods and Nutrition Extension, University of Georgia to the Institute of Food Technologists, June 2006

Tomato Sauces

Each year we get questions about processing a favorite pizza sauce, spaghetti sauce, or other tomato product. Because tomatoes have borderline acidity, it is important to use a USDA research-tested recipe. Some of these recipes have enough lemon juice and so few low acid flavoring ingredients that they can be safely processed in the boiling water bath. Other recipes have enough green peppers, onions, and garlic added that they must be processed in a pressure canner to destroy botulism bacteria. Any tomato sauce with added meat will require pressure canning. Never ever can tomato products by the open kettle method—in fact, no foods should be open kettle canned.



No research-based recipe for canning Pizza Sauce is available. Can a standard tomato sauce and add your favorite seasonings when you prepare the pizza.

The Penn State flyer **Let's Preserve Tomatoes** includes recipes for Standard Tomato Sauce, Chili Salsa, Spaghetti Sauce With and Without Meat, Barbecue Sauce, and several versions of Ketchup. Call the extension office for a free copy of this flyer. The *Ball Blue Book* is another good source of research-tested recipes for tomato sauces.

Pickled Corn Relish

10 cups fresh whole kernel corn (16 to 20 medium-size ears), or six 10-ounce packages of frozen corn
2 ½ cups diced sweet red peppers
2 ½ cups diced sweet green peppers
2 ½ cups chopped celery
1 ¼ cups diced onion
1 ¾ cups sugar
5 cups vinegar (5% acidity)
2 ½ tablespoons canning or pickling salt
2 ½ teaspoons celery seed
2 ½ tablespoons dry mustard
1 ¼ teaspoons turmeric

Procedure: Boil ears of corn 5 minutes. Dip in cold water. Cut whole kernels from cob or use six 10-ounce frozen packages of corn. Combine peppers, celery, onion, sugar, vinegar, salt, and celery seed in a saucepan. Bring to boil and simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Mix mustard and turmeric in ½ cup of the simmered mixture. Add this mixture and the corn to the hot mixture. Simmer another 5 minutes. If desired, thicken mixture with flour paste* (¼ cup flour blended in ¼ cup water) and stir frequently. Fill jars with hot mixture leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process half-pints or pints for 15 minutes in a boiling-water bath canner. (20 minutes at altitudes of 1001 to 6000 feet; 25 minutes above 6,000 feet)
Yield: About 9 pints

Source: USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning

**Extreme caution must be used when thickening a product that is canned. The starch in the thickening increases the density of the product making it more difficult for heat to penetrate the jar. In this recipe, the amount of thickening used is minimal making it safe.*

Play It Safe

Hand Washing—The First Step To Safe Food Preservation

It is very easy to overlook the obvious. We spend a lot of effort to control spoilage organisms in the canning and freezing processes. We wash produce thoroughly and start with clean canning jars. But—did you wash your hands thoroughly before you started? Or did you wash your hands each time you were interrupted—for example, after picking up the baby's pacifier, moving the dog's feed dish, pushing the cat out of the way, or running to the garden for that extra onion? Bacteria, molds, and yeasts are ever present. By having our hands clean, we can reduce the number of these spoilage organisms that need to be controlled.



Wash hands before starting and frequently during the preservation process. The recommended method is to use soap and hot water and rub (friction helps remove soil) your hands for 20 seconds—the time it takes to sing the Happy Birthday song twice. Check under the nails too. Rinse hands thoroughly and dry with a clean towel.

Mold Under The Lid

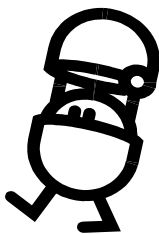
Several callers have wondered what they were doing wrong when they found mold under the lid of sealed jars. This indicates that the jars were under processed.

Molds occur naturally and are in the air. They can enter a jar between the time you put the food into the jar and apply the lid. While molds are easy to kill if the internal temperature of the food is heated to 140 to 190°F, the food must be processed correctly to reach that temperature.

Food that is not processed for the recommended number of minutes will not be heated through. Start counting the processing time in a boiling-water bath canner after the water returns to a boil. Make sure the jars are covered with at least one inch of water; water needs to completely surround the jar to evenly heat the contents inside. If using canning times for hot packed directions, the ingredients going into the jars must be hot. Work quickly so that the temperature of food going into the last jar is the same as that which went into the first jar. Most products except jams and jellies can be left over low heat while filling the jars. Because food that goes into the first jar can cool while later jars are being filled, fill a jar and put the lid and cap on before filling the next jar. The water in the canner for hot packed food should be 180°F when jars are added.

Open kettle canning should never be used. Because the jars are not processed, there isn't enough heat to kill mold spores that get into the headspace.

Even jams and jellies should be processed in a boiling water bath to kill organisms that get into the headspace.



Using Moldy Food

If you find mold growing inside a jar of canned food, is it safe to scrape it off and eat the food? No. Mold growth in food can alter the pH or acidity of the food. This could mean that a high acid product could become low acid and therefore run the risk of botulism or other bacterial spoilage. A few molds produce mycotoxins, poisonous substances that can make people sick. These are found primarily in grains and nuts but have been found in some fruits and vegetables including grape juice and apples products—two frequently canned foods. Any home canned product that shows signs of mold growth should be discarded.

Things I'd Like You To Know

Every now and then, your conversations indicate there are procedures of which some of you are not aware.

1. Measure the headspace on your jars occasionally. The grooves on the jar are not ½ inch. It also varies by the brand of the jar.
2. Vent a pressure canner 10 minutes before applying the pressure regulator.
3. Allow the jars to set in the boiling water bath for 5 minutes with the lid off after the processing time is complete. Temperatures equalize in the jars and there is less siphoning.
4. Don't tighten lids after processing—that's a throwback to zinc lids with rubber gaskets. Tightening today's two piece lids can cut through the sealing compound and break the seal.
5. When you place jars on the counter, allow a little space between jars for them to cool.
6. Remove screw bands from jars for long-term storage. They can rust causing the seal to loosen.
7. Don't pack food too tightly into the jars. Liquid allows heat to transfer to the contents inside the jar.
8. For pickled products, the vinegar in the liquid serves a preservative function. Don't reduce the amount of vinegar.

9. Salt is optional (except in fermented pickles and sauerkraut.) It only flavors the food.
10. Canning or pickling salt is pure salt without iodine or other additives. Use it to avoid cloudiness in canned foods.

Freezing Ideas

A Meal In A Bag

Using some of your garden fresh beans, carrots, summer squash, peppers, and, onions; you can create tasty and quick stir fried meals. Later in the season, use broccoli or cauliflower. Combine with thinly sliced meat and season as you like.

Here is a way to create your own “meal in a bag”. Stir fry diced boneless, skinless chicken breast until almost done. Set aside to cool. Cook spiral pasta until almost done—you want it to hold its shape. Drain and chill pasta. Blanch and chill a mixture of vegetables as you would for freezing each vegetable. If using tomatoes in this freezer meal, blanch them to remove the skins. Otherwise, the skins will become papery when frozen. Combine the amount of pasta, chicken, and vegetables that would make one meal in a freezer bag. Insert seasoning bag, if desired, and freeze. (A seasoning bag for 2 large servings or 4 small servings can be made by combining one to two teaspoons chicken bouillon, ¼ teaspoon garlic powder, ¼ teaspoon onion powder, ¼ teaspoon paprika, 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes, and 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese in a small plastic sandwich or snack bag or in foil.) To use meal, cook in a hot skillet or wok on top of the stove. Add water, if needed. When hot, stir in seasoning.

Freezing Tomatoes

According to the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, it is possible to freeze raw tomatoes without blanching them first. They may be frozen without their skins or frozen whole



with their skins. Frozen tomatoes should be used in cooked foods because they become mushy when thawed.

To freeze whole tomatoes with peel, place washed, trimmed, and dried tomatoes on cookie sheets and freeze. Tomatoes do not need to be blanched before freezing. When they are frozen, transfer the tomatoes from the cookie sheets into freezer bags or other containers and seal. To use the frozen tomatoes, remove as many as needed from the freezer bag. Remove the skins by running a frozen tomato under warm water. The skin should slip off easily. Be sure to remove the skin from frozen tomatoes because the freezing process causes the skin to become papery.

To freeze peeled tomatoes, dip the washed tomatoes in boiling water for about 1 minute or until the skins split. Peel and then freeze them whole, sliced, chopped, or pureed.

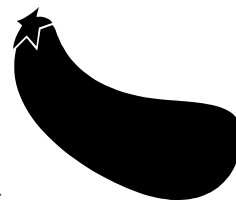
Freezing raw tomatoes does not stop enzymes reactions. Cooking the tomatoes before freezing improves the texture and color but takes longer.

Glass Freezer Containers

Freezing foods in regular glass jars runs the risk of jars breaking easily. There are glass jars specifically designed for dual use in the freezer and for canning. These jars have been tempered to withstand extremes in temperatures. The wide mouth allows easy removal of partially thawed foods. If you use standard canning jars (those with narrow mouths) to freeze food, leave extra headspace to allow for expansion of the food during freezing. Expansion of the liquid could cause the jars to break at the neck. Also, foods will need to be thawed completely before removing them from the jar.

What To Do With Zucchini

When you have an abundance of zucchini, try freezing some. The National Center for Home Food Preservation gives these directions for freezing grated zucchini for baking. Wash and grate young tender zucchini. Steam blanch in small



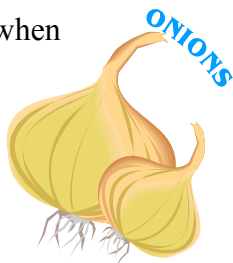
quantities 1 to 2 minutes until translucent. Pack in measured amounts into containers, leaving ½-inch headspace. Cool by placing the containers in cold water. Seal and freeze. If watery when thawed, discard the liquid before using the zucchini.

Some people freeze the grated zucchini without blanching. Blanching stops the enzyme activity preventing it from becoming tough.

Use grated zucchini in soup, fritters, pancakes, cakes, and even cornbread. Grated zucchini and grated carrots can be added to meatloaf for extra nutrition. Chocolate disguises the flavor of zucchini in cakes and muffins. Another possibility is to prepare the zucchini bread or cake and freeze the prepared product.

Freezing Onions

If you have onions left over when cooking with fresh onions, try freezing them. Cut the fully mature onion into ½ inch pieces or smaller. You don't need to blanch them. Bag and freeze in vapor proof freezer bags. Package flat to hasten freezing and make it easier to break off sections as needed. Remove all the air from the bag and place on cookie sheets until onions are frozen. Then restack bags to take up less room. Onions may also be frozen in glass freezer jars. Plastic wrap can be inserted between layers to make it easier to remove smaller amounts. Use in cooked products. For most dishes, frozen onions may be used with little or no thawing.



Cobby Corn



One of the most common complaints with frozen corn on the cob is a “cobby” taste. Prevent this by cooling blanched corn promptly and completely. Heat is absorbed throughout the cob when it is blanched. It takes time to remove all that heat during the cooling process. Changing the water frequently and using ice water hastens the cooling process. The inside of the ear can still be warm even

when the outside of the corn feels cool. It will take as long to cool the corn as it did to blanch it.

Frozen corn on the cob is prepared by blanching small ears (1 ¼ inches or less in diameter) for 7 minutes in boiling water; medium size ears (1 ¼ to 1 ½ inches in diameter) for 9 minutes, and large ears (over 1 ½ inches) for 11 minutes. Cool in several changes of cold water and drain. For frozen cut corn, blanch the corn only 4 minutes. Cool and cut kernels from the cob at about three-fourths their depth.

You want to freeze corn without blanching? Results will vary depending upon the variety of the corn and growing conditions for a particular year. Varieties of super-sweet corn have been frozen for up to 8 months without significant loss of flavor. However, a taste panel preferred blanched corn when it was frozen longer than 8 months. Blanching destroys the enzymes that continue the ripening process.

Source: Penn State Home Food Preservation Forum

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