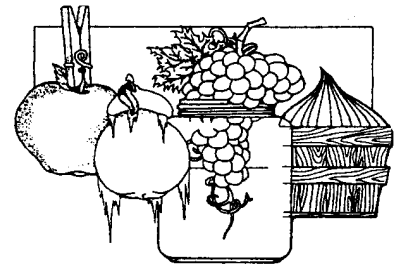


Quality for Keeps



Information for those who produce and preserve food

Preserve winter squash and pumpkins

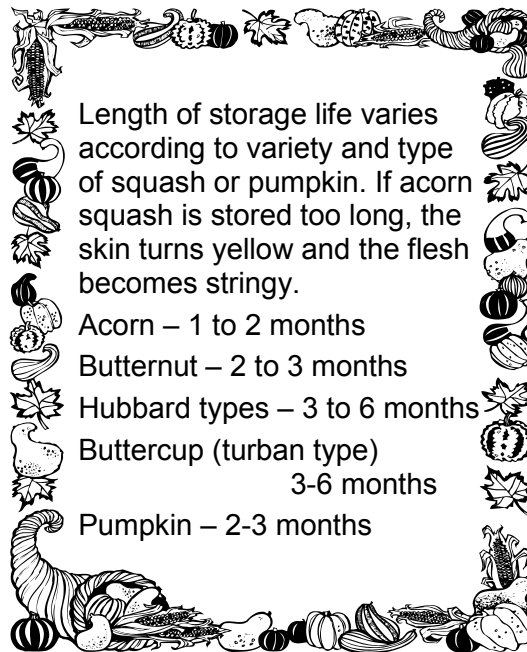
Both pumpkins and winter squash can be used for pies, pumpkin bread, and freezer pumpkin butter. Both are a tasty source of vitamins and minerals, particularly beta-carotene, vitamin C and potassium.

For cooking purposes, choose a small pumpkin. These will have more tender, flavorful flesh. Select pumpkins that are free of blemishes, harvested with their stems intact and those that feel heavy for their size. Pumpkins without stems do not store well. Hubbard-type squash stores best with the stems completely removed. Harvest all types of squash and pumpkin before frost begins. Squash are ready for harvest when the rind is hard enough to resist fingernail scratches.

Storing. Store in a cool, dry place, such as an attic or spare room (root cellars are too damp) at 50° to 55°F up to 1 month, or refrigerate for up to three months. Higher temperatures cause the flesh to become stringy. Squash and pumpkin deteriorate rapidly if stored at temperatures below 50°F. Fruit that has been exposed to freezing before harvest also will deteriorate rapidly. Keep pumpkin and squash dry to pre-

vent the growth of decay fungi and bacteria. Air circulation keeps moisture from forming on the surfaces of the fruit.

Store pumpkin and squash on shelves. Do not store fruit on cold concrete floors. Promptly discard any fruit that shows signs of decay. Do not store pumpkin or



Length of storage life varies according to variety and type of squash or pumpkin. If acorn squash is stored too long, the skin turns yellow and the flesh becomes stringy.

Acorn – 1 to 2 months

Butternut – 2 to 3 months

Hubbard types – 3 to 6 months

Buttercup (turban type)

3-6 months

Pumpkin – 2-3 months

squash near apples, pears, or other ripening fruit. Ripening fruit releases ethylene gas, which causes yellowing of the squash and shortens storage life.

Preparation. Fresh pumpkin can be pared and cooked in the manner of most any squash.

Cut pumpkin into chunks and simmer for 20-40 minutes, depending on size and age. Drain. When cool enough to handle, remove the skin and purée.

Pumpkins may also be baked, pierce small pumpkins several times with a sharp knife and bake whole on a tray in an oven at 325°F until tender. Length of baking time depends on the size of the pumpkin. Halve larger pumpkins and bake on cookie sheets, cut side down. When cool, quarter pumpkins and peel off the outer skin. Scoop out the seeds and stringy membrane. Keep the seeds for roasting.

You may also cook pumpkins in a microwave or pressure cooker.

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Preserve pumpkins & winter squash *(Cont'd from page one)*

Freezing. Freezing is the easiest way to preserve extra pumpkin, and it yields the best quality product. Select full-colored mature pumpkins with fine texture.

Wash, cut into cooking-size sections and remove seeds. Cook until soft in boiling water, by steaming, pressure cooking, or in an oven or microwave.

To cool, place pan containing pumpkin in cold water and stir occasionally. Remove pulp from rind and mash. Package, seal and freeze in amounts needed for recipes.

When ready to use, thaw in the refrigerator.

Canning. Pumpkin may only be canned as cubes. Pack pumpkin cubes into canning jars, cover with boiling

liquid and can in a pressure canner. **Because of pumpkin's low acidity, pressure canning is a must! It is not safe to can mashed or pureed pumpkin. The mixture is so thick that no safe processing time has been established.**

Drain and puree pumpkin before using it in most recipes. Complete canning instructions for pumpkin are available at: GH 1454 *Preserve Your Garden Delights* and *How to Can Fresh Vegetables* at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/hesguide/foodnut/gh1454.htm>

Roasting Seeds. Roasted pumpkin seeds make a terrific high energy snack. To roast, wash off strings and blot seeds dry. Toss with a small amount of vegetable oil, spread in a

single layer on a shallow baking sheet and bake at 250°F for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Salt, if desired, cool and store. Shelled pumpkin seeds can be used as an alternative to pine nuts in recipes.

Sources: FS 230 Storing Pumpkin and Winter Squash at Home. Oregon State University. 1993. GH1503, Quality for Keeps: Freezing Vegetables. University of Missouri Extension. 2007 MP601, Pumpkins from Harvest to Health University of Missouri Extension.



Busy bees store honey at room temperature



To Store Honey—
Clean the jars with hot soapy water, rinse thoroughly, and allow them to completely air dry. Sterilization is not necessary.

Pure honey keeps best in airtight containers in a dry place at room temperature (70° to 80°F). An air-tight cover is necessary, because honey loses aroma and flavor and absorbs moisture and odors when exposed to air.

Normally honey is low enough in water that no microorganisms can grow. But if moisture gets

into it, honey can become diluted, allowing yeasts and molds to grow.

Honey that foams and smells like alcohol is spoiled and should be discarded. Honey may crystallize or granulate as it gets older,

or if it is refrigerated or frozen. This is a natural process and does not harm the honey in any way.

To return crystallized honey to liquid form, place the open container of honey in a pan of hot (not boiling) water until crystals disappear. Honey can also be warmed to make filling into jars easier. Be careful not to overheat, because too much heat causes honey to change color and flavor.



Source: <http://extension.psu.edu/food-safety/food-preservation/faq/storing-honey>

Avoid unsafe home-canning gift ideas

Every fall potentially unsafe home-canning ideas get rediscovered and are quickly passed around women's clubs, internet postings, and newsgroups. None of these gift ideas are safe and should not be attempted at home. Neither should homemade versions be purchased at fall festivals or farmer's markets.

Canned breads and cakes.

Canned breads and cakes in glass jars are popular gift ideas, but the item is really not home-canned. It is baked in an open glass jar and then covered with a canning lid. No further processing is given to the product.

These recipes appear in older cookbooks, magazines, and on the internet. However, canning jar manufacturers do not currently endorse baking in their canning jars.

Canned breads and cakes can often be found for sale at fairs and craft shows. Commercial companies use additives, preservatives, and processing controls not available when home recipes are used. Canned breads and cakes cannot be duplicated at home.

Since most cake and bread recipes contain very little acid, bacteria such as clostridium botulinum can easily grow and cause fatal foodborne illness. In addition, breads and cakes have added fruit, zucchini, pumpkin, and liquid, which contributes moisture for the growth of mold, yeast, and bacteria.

Do not purchase canned breads and cakes in glass jars, unless they contain additives to prevent mold and microbial growth and meet all the labeling requirements for commercial foods.

Do not make canned breads and cakes at home. Banana nut bread, zuc-

chini bread, or similar products, should be either fresh or frozen, not canned.

Don't eat it if someone gives you a home-canned product. A safer option is to freeze gift breads and cakes.

Canned pumpkin butter or mashed and pureed squash.

Canned pureed squash or canned pumpkin butter are also popular products, which are unsafe if made at home. These products are too thick and too low in acidity to be safely canned at home.

Pumpkin and winter squash are low-acid foods (pH less than 4.6) and can allow clostridium botulinum bacteria to grow under the right storage conditions. The resulting foodborne illness can be fatal. Even if lemon juice, or vinegar is added, batches have been found to vary in acidity.

- Do not can pumpkin butter.
- Do not can pureed pumpkin or squash.
- Do not eat it if given to you as a gift.

A better option is to make freezer pumpkin butter. Pumpkin may be canned only as cubes in water using a pressure canner:

http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/how/can_04/pumpkin_winter_squash.html

Pumpkin preserves. Jelled preserves rely on the natural acidity present in most fruits for safe food preservation. Most fruits have natural acids, so resulting jams or jellies can be safely canned in a boiling water bath process.

Pumpkin, however, is a low-acid vegetable and cannot be safely canned in a boiling water bath process. A jam or sweetened preserve would have to have enough sugar and/or added acid to be treated safely without concerns

about botulism. A certain acidity level is also required to cause the pectin molecule to form a gel structure.

The USDA and Georgia Cooperative Extension currently do not have any tested recipes to recommend for safely canning pumpkin preserves (jams, jellies, conserves, or pumpkin butter), and storing them at room temperature. These pumpkin products must be stored in the refrigerator or freezer and treated the same as fresh pumpkin. Refer to:

http://www.homefoodpreservation.com/publications/uga/pumpkin_butter.html

Home-canned chocolate

sauce. Chocolate sauces, although popular on the internet, are low-acid recipes and are a risk for botulism food poisoning. Therefore, any chocolate sauce recipes that use a boiling water canning process are especially at risk. Furthermore, there are no science-based, tested recipes for chocolate sauces utilizing the pressure canning process in either the "*USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning*" (1994), the University of Georgia's "*So Easy to Preserve*" (1999), or in publications from land grant University partners in the Cooperative Extension System.

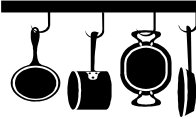
Instead of canning, freeze your chocolate sauce recipe.

Sources: "Canning Cakes and Breads?" Elizabeth L. Address, Ph.D., University of Georgia Extension. http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/uga/uga_can_breads.pdf

"Canning Chocolate Sauces Unsafe". Brian A. Nummer, Ph.D. National Center for Home Food Preservations, July 2003, http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/nchfp/factsheets/choc_sauce.html

"Canning Pumpkin Butter and Mashed or Pureed Squashes", Elizabeth L. Address, Ph.D., Penn State Extension 2011, <http://extension.psu.edu/food-safety/food-preservation/issues/general-canning/canning-pumpkin-butter-and-mashed-or-pureed-squashes?searchterm=pumpkin>

THE RECIPE BOX



Freezer Chocolate Fudge Sauce



- 1/2 cup margarine or butter
- 3 squares (3 oz.) unsweetened chocolate
- 2-1/2 cups sugar
- pinch of salt
- 12 oz. can evaporated milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Procedure: Melt margarine in the top of a double-boiler. Add chocolate and melt, while constantly stirring. Add sugar gradually, 1/4-cup at a time, while stirring. Then add salt, if desired. Next, stir milk in gradually and, finally, add the vanilla. Cook until desired thickness—approximately 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

Pour sauce into a clean, warm, wide-mouth quart jar, or similar freezer-safe container(s). Allow the sauce to cool at room temperature for 1 to 2 hours. Seal and freeze.

The sauce should remain soft enough to spoon out portions while frozen.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation, http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/nchfp/factsheets/choc_sauce.html.

Quality for Keeps, published monthly, April through October, is made available to residents of East Central and Southeast Missouri by their Extension Councils. Contact your county Extension office to subscribe, or visit our website <http://missouri.extension.edu/franklin>. Questions may be directed to:

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