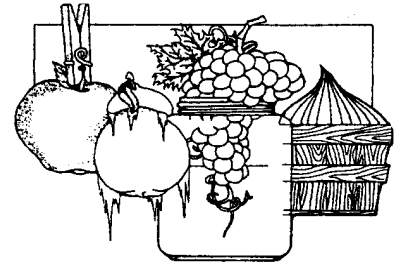


# Quality for Keeps



Information for those who produce and preserve food

## When plums are plum plentiful

*The early spring has yielded a plentiful supply of plums this year, which can be easily canned or frozen for later use. Plums are also excellent as jam, jelly or plum sauce. With the help of a food dehydrator, turn extras into prunes. Locally grown plums are available at farmers markets, produce stands, and perhaps from friends and neighbors, if one is so fortunate.*

There are two main types of plums, European and Japanese. The Japanese plums are generally clingstone and best for eating fresh, made into plum sauce, juice, jams and jellies. The European plums are freestone and are suitable for eating fresh, drying, and canning. Some good varieties for jellies and jams are: Santa Rosa, Satsuma, Methley, flowering Japanese, and wild plums.

European varieties are always blue or purple. They have a milder flavor and firmer texture. Italian prune plums are one example. They are dark blue when ripe, with yellow flesh that easily separates from the pit. This variety is especially suited to drying, but is also good for canning or freezing, as well as eating fresh. Prune plums are a good source of iron and vitamin A.

Damson and Earliblue plums are European varieties grown in Missouri. Damson are small to medium blue plums best suited to making preserves, jam and jelly. Earliblue is a

prune-type plum with gold-colored, freestone flesh.

Japanese varieties grown in Missouri include: Shiro, Redheart, and Ozark Premier.

**Selection.** Good quality plums are plump, clean, look fresh and full colored. They should feel firm, but not hard. Allow firm, mature plums to sit at room temperature for three to four days to soften and become juicy. Once ripe, keep cold and humid in the refrigerator and use within three to five days if possible.



**Preparation.** Plums are a great fruit for home-canning. Since the skins are edible, no peeling is required. Skipping this step means plums can be processed very quickly. Sweet, juicy canned plums bring a taste of summer to winter meals.

**Yields and equivalents:** One pound Japanese varieties, (about six average plums, approx. 2-inches in diameter), will yield 2½ to 3 cups sliced or chopped. One pound European varieties, (12-15 average plums), will yield about 2 cups sliced.

**Canning.** Select deep-colored, mature plums of ideal quality for eating fresh or cooking. For best quality, allow plums to ripen at least one day after harvest. Plums may be packed in water or syrup—very light, light, or medium syrup, (see pg. 2 for instructions).

Each 7-quart canner load requires about 14 pounds of fresh plums. Each 9-pint canner load requires about 9 pounds fresh plums.

To can whole plums, stem and wash. Prick skin on two sides of plums with fork to prevent splitting. Freestone varieties may be halved and pitted.

Hot pack is recommended to prevent plums from floating in jars. Add plums to water or hot syrup and boil 2 minutes. Cover saucepan and let stand 20 to 30 minutes. Pack hot plums into hot jars. Fill jars with hot cooking liquid, leaving ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process in a boiling water bath, pints for 20 minutes, quarts for 25 minutes. At altitudes from 1,001 to 3,000 feet, process in a boiling water bath, pints for 25 minutes and quarts for 30 minutes.

*(Cont'd on page two)*

### Inside this issue:

Canning, my first time .....	2
Acidity matters.....	3
Plum sauce .....	4

(Cont'd from page one)

**Freezing.** Select firm, ripe fruit soft enough to yield to slight pressure. Sort and wash. Leave whole or cut in halves or quarters and pit.

Pack fruit into containers and cover with medium syrup\*. For improved quality, add ½-teaspoon crystalline ascorbic acid to each quart of syrup. Leave ½-inch headspace per pint or 1-inch per quart. Seal, label and freeze.

*\*To prepare a medium syrup: Heat to boil 1-¾ cup sugar in 4 cups water, until dissolved. Cool.*

**Drying.** Most plums and prunes dry very well. Select fully mature, fresh, sweet fruit, free from soft spots and blemishes. Wash and cut in half. Press to flatten fruit. Halves can be steam blanched for 1-2 minutes to hasten drying. Dry at 130° to 135°F. until pliable with no pockets of moisture.

Dried prunes are great eaten as snacks or used in breads, fillings, salads and fruit soups.

Sources: University of Missouri Guide GH1455 Fruitful Canning and So Easy to Preserve, University of Georgia.



## Canning, my first time, yes, I can!

*Individuals who have never canned before may not have much equipment, but would like to preserve some foods for family use, or as thoughtful gifts.*

Water bath canning is an easy way to experiment with home canning, and does not require much investment in expensive equipment. Basic equipment needed includes:

- Canning jars with new flats and rings.
- A water bath canner, which consists of a deep pot with a rack at the bottom, (a deep stock pot can often do double duty as a water bath canner). The stock pot should be deep enough to cover the filled jars of food with 2- inches of water above the jars. Add a rack to the bottom of the canner to lift the jars ½-inch off the bottom. This prevents jar breakage. Add a lid to prevent evaporation of water during the canning process.
- A jar lifter, to place filled jars in the hot canner, and remove processed jars from the canner.

- A funnel to fill jars.
- Colanders, mixing bowls, saucepots, tongs, sharp knives, cutting boards, cleavers, and wooden spoons are often already at hand.

Foods that can be safely preserved in a water bath canner include:

- Fruit: peaches, apples, applesauce, cherries, pears, and plums.
- Jams and jelly: grape jelly, strawberry jam, and apple butter.
- Pickles like bread and butter pickles, zucchini relish, pickled peppers.
- Tomato products: canned tomatoes, taco sauce, no-meat spaghetti sauce, and salsa.

Choose a safe, tested recipe. Hand-me-down recipes work great for cakes and casseroles, but are not recommended for canning. Knowledge of safe canning methods has changed greatly from grandma's day, so use up-to-date recipes from one of these sources:

- New Ball® Blue Book, dated 1989 or more recent, which is available at bookstores, farm supply stores

and canning centers in rural areas. Some extension offices stock this publication for resale.

- University of Missouri food preservation guides sheets, on canning, freezing, pickles, jams and jelly, and drying foods. Read these carefully before beginning. All guide sheets are available at little or no cost from your local Extension Office or on-line at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/main/DisplayCategory.aspx?C=194>.
- The National Center for Home Food Preservation has wonderful how-to information and recipes for just about everything that is safe to can at: [http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can\\_home.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_home.html).
- Lastly, look for local hands-on canning classes sponsored by county extension offices throughout Missouri. Check your county calendar at: <http://extension.edu>.

## Acidity matters when canning

*The acidity, or pH, of foods determines how they must be processed for canning.*

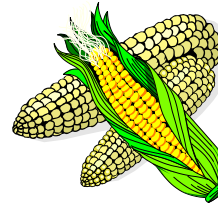
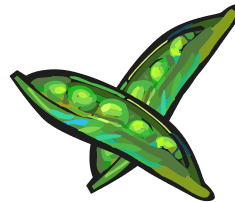
Acid foods, such as fruits and pickles, with a pH of 4.6 or lower may be canned in a water bath canner. Low acid foods, such as vegetables and meats, with a pH above

4.6 **must** be processed in a pressure canner.

High acid foods include most fruits, jellies, pickles, and firm ripe tomatoes. Over-ripe food is usually less acidic. Thus, over-ripe tomatoes should be turned into products that contain plenty of added vine-

gar, such as barbeque sauce or ketchup. Only firm ripe tomatoes should be canned.

Also, tomatoes require the addition of citric acid (the acid naturally in tomatoes) or lemon juice to make sure the pH is at 4.6 or lower.



### Foods suitable for water bath canning.

A boiling water temperature of 212°F, plus a low pH number is sufficient to kill bacteria, yeast and mold, thus preserving the food.

Food	Approximate pH
Apples	3.30—4.00
Apricots	3.30—4.80
Blueberries, Maine	3.12—3.33
Cherries, red	3.25—3.82
Gooseberries	2.80—3.10
Grapes, Concord	2.80—3.00
Mangoes, ripe	3.40—4.80
Peaches	3.30—4.05
Pears, Bartlett	3.50—4.60
Pineapple	3.20—4.00
Plums, Damson	2.90—3.10
Rhubarb	3.10—3.40
Strawberries	3.00—3.90
Sauerkraut	3.30—3.60
Tomatoes (add citric acid)	4.30—4.90
Vinegar (for comparison)	2.40—3.40

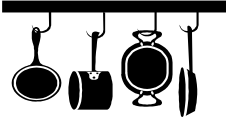
**Pressure can these foods.** Foods with a pH higher than 4.6 must be canned in a pressure canner, unless they are turned into pickles. A pressure canner reaches temperatures of 240°F, which is necessary to kill bacteria, yeast and mold in low-acid foods like vegetables, meat and fish. Thus, most vegetables, like corn, carrots, green beans, peas and beets must be pressure canned, unless they are pickled.

Food	Approximate pH
Asparagus	6.00—6.70
Beans, Lima	6.50
Beans, String	5.60
Beets	5.30—6.60
Cabbage	5.20—6.80
Carrots	5.88—6.40
Corn	5.90—7.30
Fish	6.10—6.90
Peas	6.22—6.88
Pumpkin (cubed only!)	4.90—5.50

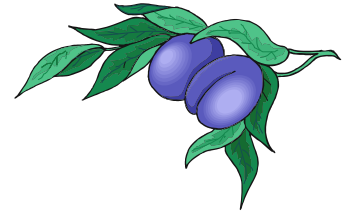
Sources: US Food and Drug Administration. *Acidified and Low-Acid Canned Foods* April 2007.

HGIC 3030 *Canning Foods—the pH Factor*. Clemson University Extension. [http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/food\\_safety/preservation/hgic3030.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/food_safety/preservation/hgic3030.html).

## THE RECIPE BOX



### Plum Sauce



Plum sauce is excellent over pork, chicken, or egg rolls. The chili peppers add a bit of heat. Choose a milder pepper for less heat.

- 4 pounds plums, pitted and chopped
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 cup white sugar
- 3/4 cup chopped onion (about 1 medium)
- 2 Tbsp. chopped green chili peppers
- 2 Tbsp. mustard seed
- 1 inch piece fresh ginger, minced
- 1 clove garlic
- 1Tbsp. salt
- 1 cup cider vinegar

**Procedure:** Wash plums. Drain. Pit and chop plums. Combine vinegar, sugars, and seasonings in a large saucepot. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and add chopped plums. Cook until thick and syrupy, about 1-1/2 hours. Pour sauce into hot jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Adjust two-piece lids and process 20 minutes in a boiling water canner.

Yield: 4 pints.

**Note:** When cutting or seeding hot peppers, wear rubber gloves to prevent hands from being burned.

Source: Oregon State University Extension Service. *Preserving Foods; Plums and Prunes. SP 50-586, Revised May 2009.*

*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:

*Mary Schroepfer*

**Mary Schroepfer**  
Nutrition & Health Specialist  
116 W. Main  
Union, MO 63084  
Ph: (636) 583-5141  
Fax: (636) 583-5145  
Email: SchroepferM@missouri.edu

*Judith Lueders*

**Judith Lueders**  
Nutrition & Health Specialist  
321 N. Main, Suite 1  
Perryville, MO 63775  
Ph: (573) 547-4504  
Fax: (573) 547-4535  
Email: LuedersJ@missouri.edu

#### EAST CENTRAL OFFICES:

Franklin	(636) 583-5141
Jefferson	(636) 797-5391
Lincoln	(636) 528-4613
Montgomery	(573) 564-3733
St. Charles	(636) 970-3000
St. Francois	(573) 756-4539
Ste. Genevieve	(573) 883-3548
St. Louis City	(314) 367-2585
St. Louis	(314) 615-2911
Warren	(636) 456-3444
Washington	(573) 438-2671

#### SOUTHEAST MISSOURI OFFICES

Bollinger	(573) 238-2420
Butler	(573) 686-8064
Cape Girardeau	(573) 243-3581
Carter	(573) 323-4418
Dunklin	(573) 888-4722
Iron	(573) 546-7515
Madison	(573) 783-3303
Mississippi	(573) 683-6129
New Madrid	(573) 748-5531
Pemiscot	(573) 333-0258
Perry	(573) 547-4504
Reynolds	(573) 648-1035
Ripley	(573) 996-2921
Scott	(573) 545-3516
Stoddard	(573) 568-3344
Wayne	(573) 224-3035