Preparing for Canning Season

by Janet Hackert, Regional Nutrition and Health Education Specialist

With gardens finally taking off, now is a good time to look ahead to the harvest and think about food preservation.

First, if there will be low acid foods to be preserved, such as green beans and other vegetables, a pressure canner is required to safely can them. Before canning this season, have the dial pressure gauge on the canner checked for accuracy. In Northwest Missouri, any county MU Extension office can test the gauge. This will insure that the pressure on the gauge – and in the canner – is what is expected, and that the food is being heated to the temperature needed to kill any microorganisms that can cause food borne illness or death.

Also before the canning starts, consider the type of stove that will be used. Ceramic- or glass-top stoves have become very popular, but may not be appropriate for canning. Like all electric stoves, a glass-top’s burners come on and off during cooking. Unique to a glass-top stove, however, is its added safety feature. To prevent overheating of the surface, and thus damage to the stove, the cook top senses when too much heat has built up under a pot and shuts off. It is not just going through the normal on/off cycle but fully shuts off until the stovetop cools. Pressure canning and boiling water canning involve a long enough and hot enough process for this safety shutoff to occur before processing is complete, leaving the partially canned food unsafe for storage at room temperature. Although there may be some glass-top stoves that work for canning, most do not. Check manufacturer’s recommendations for details.

As in seasons past, there are lots of new items being marketed this year, including a variety of lids and jars. The National Center for Home Food Preservation continues to recommend the use of two piece lids and mason-type jars designed specifically for canning. The two pieces include a single-use flat and a reusable ring. “When jars and lids are used properly, jar seals and vacuums are excellent and jar breakage is rare,” recommends the center’s web site. More specific information on recommended jars and lids can be found in our MU Extension Publication GH1452, Quality for Keeps: Steps to Success in Home Canning.

For more information on other recommendations before you can or any other topic, contact me, Janet Hackert, at 660-425-6434 or HackertJ@missouri.edu or your local University of Missouri Extension office.

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