June 4, 2015

Clinton, Mo. – Memories of Preserving Food with my Mother

Hello, I am Holly Jay, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist for Henry, Cass and Johnson Counties. I grew up on a farm in North Central Nebraska, I was an eleven year 4-H member and later attended college in Lincoln, Nebraska. As the Nutrition and Health Specialist I look forward to providing research based information that will help people improve their lives and learn new skills.

Growing up on the farm we had a large garden every summer. Mom preserved foods by drying, freezing and water and pressure canning our summer’s bounty. I learned much during these summers on how to preserve food for use in the cold Nebraska winters.

Since childhood my food preservation knowledge continues to improve as a result of up to date research and improved safety methods recommended by Extension. Since beginning my position with Missouri Extension pressure canner testing has been one area of focus. Each year pressure canners should be tested to assure the gauges are reading accurately and the canners are in good working order.

Recommended procedures have changed through the years and that caused me to contemplate how to inform people about recommended practices for proper food preservation. Hands on classes seemed to be the best answer.

Food preservation classes were scheduled in Henry county at the Rotary Building and the last sessions will be June 8th - pickling and June 11th - salsa preservation. Participants will learn recommended practices while preserving through a hands on experience.
When I was growing up Mother taught me to preserve jelly. We used paraffin wax to seal our jars. These were the preferred methods at that time. Now, there are methods that have been proven to be safer and more efficient for preservation of these sweet spreads.

MU Extension recommends all foods be processed according to current recipes from reliable sources. There is a lot of information available to us as consumers. Unfortunately not all of this information is accurate. There are several websites and sources that should be first on your list for preserving foods. The best sources are the USDA Food Preservation website: [http://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html) or your local MU Extension Center. Both of these sources use tested recipes that have been proven to be the safest method if followed correctly.

I have used information from the University of Missouri website: [http://www.extension.missouri.edu/publications](http://www.extension.missouri.edu/publications), as well as University of Georgia So Easy To Preserve 6th Edition book. Another good source that is available at your local canning supply store is the Ball Blue Book.

Ok, so you have your recipe, your canner, and are ready to go. There are some other things to keep in mind. It is always recommended to use good personal hygiene, approved canning jars that are clean, use new lids, and select good quality produce.

We have talked about sweat spreads but these rules also apply to salsa, and other high acid foods. In order to store canned foods on a shelf, not refrigerated, they must be processed using a waterbath method and sealed. Low acid foods such as meats, seafood, fish and vegetables must be processed using a pressure canner.

So why are low acid foods required to be pressure canned? The temperature at which bacteria is killed is 212\(^{0}\). But the spores produced by the bacteria are not destroyed until 240\(^{0}\). The main culprit is *Clostridium botulinum*. The bacteria and its spores are tasteless, odorless, and colorless. So you do not even know you are literally killing yourself if you eat it until it is too late. And yes, you could become seriously ill or even die from eating food containing these spores.
Now I don’t want to scare people and there is a simple solution. Process your foods using recipes from a reliable source and using recommended methods either a waterbath canner or pressure canner.

I hope that all of your food preservation efforts are well rewarded this winter when you enjoy all the “fruits of your labor”. And I would love to have you join me in the Pickling or Salsa Preservation workshops in Clinton.

If you have any questions or want more information about canning/preserving food at home please contact me, Holly Jay, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist, University of Missouri – Cass, Henry or Johnson Counties at 816-380-8461 or email: jayh@missouri.edu. You may also visit our website at: http://www.extension.missouri.edu to see upcoming Food Preservation Classes in your area. I would be glad to work with you on any topic related to nutrition and health. I am looking forward to meeting you and welcome you to call or send an email.

For more information or to register for the pickling or salsa classes, stop by or call Henry County Center University of Missouri Extension at 660-885-5556.

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