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Prevent Buckling Canning Lids

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In recent years canning lids have changed several times and so the recommendations for using them, and sealing jars successfully, have changed as well. Perhaps the most common concern is buckling lids. But this problem can be prevented.

Lids buckle or, as some would describe it, “crinkle” when the lids are put on too tightly. The USDA recommends using two-piece lids. One piece is what is commonly referred to as a flat. It is a relatively flat circle of metal with an inner liner and a ring of sealing compound that resembles rubber. The other piece is a metal ring that is screwed down over the flat and jar to secure the flat to the jar during the canning process. USDA guidelines say to fill the jar according to the procedure for the particular food that is being canned, wipe the rim of the jar with a clean paper towel to remove any liquid or particles that may be present, and place the flat on the rim of the jar. Then tighten the ring. Although one might want to tighten the lid as tightly as it will go, manufacturers recommend finger-tip tight. This means that once the ring stops turning freely, it is tight enough. When the screw band is tightened too much, the result is that the lid will buckle. This often results in the canned food not sealing, as is needed to be safely stored on a shelf.

The lid needs to be adjusted properly so that the canning process can progress properly. During canning, air trapped in the headspace between the bottom of the lid and the top of the food is forced out of the jar. When lids are too tight, the air cannot easily escape. Instead it forces its way out by deforming the lid itself. This leads to the buckling effect. The seal on a jar with a buckled lid has a very high failure rate.

Also lids sold these days should be warmed but not boiled. The sealing compound is warmed in steaming hot (NOT boiling) water. Softened, it is then ready to conform to the shape of the lip of the jar. Boiling water, on the other hand, causes that compound to melt so that it has already begun to change shape before being placed on the jar. This also often leads to the jar not sealing.

When canning, follow USDA and manufacturers recommendations to increase the likelihood of all the jars sealing and no food going to waste because it opens during storage.

For more information on using canning lids properly 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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