

## **Annual Pressure Canner Gauge Testing at Upcoming Farmers Markets**

*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. The first step is to get the dial gauge of a pressure canner tested – *before* it is needed – and to brush up on safe canning techniques.

Any low acid foods, like vegetables, meats, and some tomato products, need to be canned under pressure in order to reach the temperature required to destroy the disease-causing microorganisms that could be present. If a pressure gauge is not accurate, it could create an environment inside the canning jar that is not only unsafe but is instead the perfect breeding ground for growing the pathogens. The contamination cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted, so it is wisest to preserve it safely in the first place.

Gauge testing is being offered at local farmer markets in June. Janet Hackert, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist with University of Missouri Extension, will be on site to inspect canners, test gauges and answer questions. She will be at the King City Farmers Market, 3-7 p.m. on Wednesday, June 14, 2017. This market is located at the King City park shelter house. Hackert will be at the Bethany Farmers Market, 7:30-noon on Saturday, June 17. The Bethany market is held in the BTC parking lot on Highway 136, just west of exit 92 on I35. Testing at farmers markets will be done free of charge.

Pressure canner gauges can also be tested throughout the northwest region in county Extension offices. The test is either free or costs \$1 per gauge. For a list of locations, go to [extension.missouri.edu/nwregion](http://extension.missouri.edu/nwregion) and click on the county nearest you. The test is quick and easy, taking about 10 minutes. The gauge itself or the gauge in the lid is what is needed. The rest of the canner can also be inspected if it is brought in. Weighted gauges do not need to be tested since they stay accurate as long as they remain intact. It is the spring in the dial gauge that can get worn out or stuck, and so needs to be tested annually.

Also available in MU Extension offices are publications explaining everything from how to get started canning and step-by-step instructions on how to use a pressure and/or boiling water canner, to specifics on canning vegetables, fruits, jams and jellies, tomatoes and tomato products, pickles and pickled products, and meat, fish, and poultry.

Besides written information about canning, Hackert will be offering hands-on classes. If you would be interested in learning more about pressure canning or other types of food preservation techniques or to sign up for the classes, please contact Hackert at 660-425-6434 or [HackertJ@missouri.edu](mailto:HackertJ@missouri.edu). Classes are being offered in Hamilton (in June/July) and in Albany later in the summer. Or you contact your local Extension office for more information.

(written 6/9/17)

-##-