

News Release

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Plan ahead for home canning this summer

Planning ahead can save you time, money, and frustration with home canning. Make it a successful canning season by getting prepared before the harvest is ready. Look at the instructions well before you are ready to prepare the food. If you use a pressure canner, check that the vent ports are clear and the gasket is not cracked and brittle. It's a good idea to do a practice run of your canning equipment. You don't need to actually process anything, but do test your canner to make sure it will maintain pressure, and locate the lid and rack for your water bath canner. Finding out that you have a bad lid gasket or that your water bath canner leaks can ruin an entire day of work. Also, you may need to purchase some ingredients, such as Cleargel®, and small equipment, such as fruit strainers or jelly bags, which are included in the directions.

Ingham shares the following tips from the National Center for Home Food Preservation at the University of Georgia:

A pressure canner is essential for canning low-acid vegetables, meats, fish and poultry. Two basic types are available. One has a dial gauge to indicate the pressure inside the canner; the other has a metal weighted gauge. Dial gauges must be tested for accuracy before each canning season. For information on testing a dial gauge, call our office (683-4168). Check the rubber gasket if your canner has one; it should be flexible and soft, not brittle, sticky or cracked. Replacement gaskets are often available at hardware stores, or contact the manufacturer directly. Also, make sure any small pipes or vent ports with openings are clean and open all the way through.

A boiling water canner is needed for canning other foods such as fruits, pickles, jellies and jams. The canner should have a tight fitting lid and be deep enough to allow at least one to two inches of water to boil over the tops of the jars. Both types of canners should have a rack in the bottom to keep jars off the bottom of the canner.

Inventory your jars and decide if you need to buy new jars. Inspect them for nicks, cracks or chips, especially around the top sealing edge. Nicks can prevent lids from sealing. Very old jars can weaken with age and repeated use; they can break under pressure and heat. Consider investing in new jars if you need to, and watch for specials at the stores. New jars are often a better investment over time than buying used jars at yard sales or flea markets.

Mason-type jars specifically designed for home canning are best. Jars that use two-piece self-sealing metal lids must be used for all types of canning. Because the sealing compound can deteriorate over time, purchase new lids every year. Used lids should be thrown away. The screw bands are re-usable if they are not bent, dented or rusted.

Finally, be sure you have reliable, up-to-date canning instructions. Research-tested recipes are available at our office, online through University of Wisconsin Extension at <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/> (under Home & Family) or from the National Center for Home Food Preservation web site at <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/>

Our food preservation bulletins are designed especially for use throughout Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Safe Food Preservation Series includes Canning Fruits Safely (B0430), Making Jams, Jellies and Preserves (B2909), Freezing Fruits and Vegetables (B3278), Canning Vegetables Safely (B1159), Canning Salsa Safely (B3570), Tomatoes Tart and Tasty (B2605), Homemade Pickles and Relishes (B2267) and Canning Meat, Wild Game, Poultry and Fish Safely (B3345). These and other publications are available from our office or from Cooperative Extension Publications (877-947-7827) and online at <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/>

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