

WSU Making A Difference - Preserving Summer's Bounty

This is the time of the year that gardens are producing more produce than can be eaten and local Farmers Markets have beautiful produce at its peak for freshness and quality. For those wanting to take advantage of this, there are several methods of preserving produce so it can be enjoyed during the cold winter months. Canning is a safe method of preservation, as long as you always follow USDA recommendation and recipes, which can be found at <http://nchfp.uga.edu/> or <http://extension.wsu.edu/foodsafety/food-processing/>. Many of us have canning methods and recipes that have been passed down from one generation to the next; they appear safe but are they? The USDA recipes are up-to-date, research based and laboratory tested. There are many unsafe recipes and processes floating around on the web. Just the other day I saw a social media post about canning green beans in the oven; this is very dangerous! Green beans are low acid and must always be processed in a pressure canner, frozen, pickled or dehydrated.

There are two safe methods of canning, boiling water canner method and the pressure canner method.

- The boiling water bath method is safe for high acid fruits, jam, jelly, preserves, tomatoes and pickles. In this method, jars of food are heated and covered with boiling water for a specific length of time.
- Pressure canning is the safe method for canning low acid vegetables, meats, poultry and seafood. Jars of food are placed in 2 to 3 inches of water in a pressure canner, which is heated to a temperature of at least 240 degrees F, this temperature can only be reached in a pressure canner. Pressure canner lids are equipped with either a dial gauge or weighted gauge to check for accurate pressure. The dial gauge allows you to see the exact amount of pressure while the weighted gauge will either rock or jiggle when at the proper pressure. That pressure is then held for a specific amount of time.

If your pressure canner has a dial gauge, the USDA recommends that dial gauges be checked for accuracy annually and all newly purchased gauges should be checked before using. The Mason County WSU Extension office checks gauges every Monday from 10-noon, cost is \$3 per gauge. The office is located at 303 N 4th Street, behind Olsen Furniture. You should also make sure rubber seals on the lids are clean and pliable to ensure a tight fit.

If you do not wish to can your produce and you have freezer space, freezing is one of the best methods of preserving food as it retains the quality and nutrients. Other methods of preservation are pickling, fermenting and dehydrating. WSU offers a wide assortment of food preservation publication; most are available to download free at <http://pubs.wsu.edu>.

For those who are 18 and older and interested in taking a food preservation and food safety course, WSU has a program called Preserve the Taste of Summer. It has a

series of eight online lessons for the in-home consumer who wants to learn about food preservation and food safety. It is designed for beginning canners and also veteran canners who want to update their knowledge and skills. The lessons provide the most current USDA approved food preservation recommendations. To learn more about this program go to <http://preservesummer.cahnrs.wsu.edu> or contact your local WSU Extension office.

As the WSU Food Safety and Preservation Information Assistant, I can answer your questions and assist you with resources, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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For more information regarding the Mason County WSU Extension office call [360-427-9670](tel:360-427-9670) Ext. 680, or visit their website at <http://mason.wsu.edu>

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