

# Canning season is upon us

With the garden season upon us there has been an increase in food preservation questions at the Rusk County Extension Office. Many callers have expressed their hesitance about using a pressure canner and often ask of other options of canning low acid foods. Many express their fear of the canner “exploding” or of themselves “getting burned”. And while there are risks in using a pressure canner, it can be argued that the canner does not carry any more risk than a stove, deep fryer, electric skillet, or any other food preparation appliance. The pressure canner is safe if used responsibly.

Before using the pressure canner it is important to read the instruction manual, to inspect the canner each year to make sure it is in good condition, to have the county extension agent -family and community health test dial gauges annually, and to follow canning directions carefully. It is also best to use the pressure canner when there are no chances of interruption. Interruptions such as the television, telephone, or anything that could distract attention away from the task

could cause injury. Make it a rule that when using the pressure canner to stay with the canning task until it is completed and do not begin using the canner until it can be used at a time when there are no interruptions.

Now to why it is essential to use the pressure canner in safely processing low acid foods such as vegetables, meat, poultry and fish. The pressure canner can supply enough heat to destroy spores of bacteria that cause botulism as well as other types of spoilage. These spores survive in low-acid foods in the absence of air, which is a condition present in canned vegetables and meats. When the spores begin to grow, they produce the deadly botulinum toxin without noticeable signs of spoilage. Failure to properly process low-acid foods in a pressure canner can result in botulism which is often fatal. The processing



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temperature most often used is 240 degrees F at 10 or 11 pounds of pressure depending on the canner.

Commercially there are two types of pressure canners available: the dial gauge and the weighted gauge. The dial gauge canner has a gauge with a needle that indicates the pounds of pressure inside the canner. The weighted gauge is just as it is named. It is a weight rather than a dial. The weighted gauge does not need to be tested as long as there has been no damage to the gauge.

There are many improved methods of home canning which make it more enjoyable and safer to preserve the natural goodness of vegetables. So do not be afraid to preserve the beautiful harvest of 2020, in order to enjoy it throughout the winter. To have a dial gauge tested pressure canner tested, please contact the Rusk County Extension Office at 903-657-0376. Remember, increase your reserve, **PRESERVE!**

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.