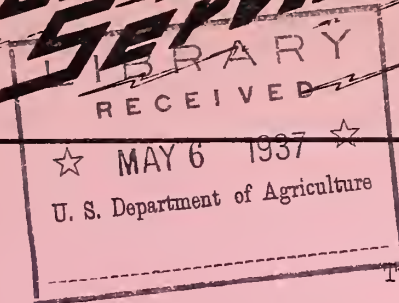


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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, May 4, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--coOoo--

Listeners, while the housewives in Maine are starting to can food for next winter, the housewives in Florida are canning for the summer when the weather is too hot for gardens to grow. But canning questions from North and South as well as from East and West are very much the same. And in general the methods are also the same for the different parts of the country.

So here is a question-and-answer day that shall be devoted exclusively to home canners and their questions, wherever they happen to live.

First question, from a listener who says she is a beginner at canning: "Dear Aunt Sammy: Can you tell me where I can find a list of all the utensils needed for putting up garden fruits and vegetables."

Answer: The best list I know is in the new Department-of-Agriculture bulletin called "Home Canning of Vegetables, Fruits, and Meats." The number of this bulletin is 1762-F. And if you want a copy, you write to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., and send your address. You are welcome to a copy as long as the free supply lasts.

Open this bulletin to page 4, and there you will find equipment and methods discussed, beginning with equipment for the boiling water bath; then for the open-kettle method; and finally for the steam pressure cooker. You will also find information on glass jars and tin cans, and on page 15 a list of smaller utensils.

Second question: Writes another listener: "Though I have been doing a little canning off and on for years, I have not kept up-to-date on methods. I have heard that scientists have learned a good deal about safe canning methods in recent years. Will you refer me to some publication where I can read up on the latest methods?"

The bulletin just mentioned is the best answer that I know to the second question as well as to the first. You will find in it the latest canning methods described in simple, clear language. Maybe you would like me to repeat the name and number. It is called "Home Canning of Vegetables, Fruits, and Meats"; its number is 1762-F; you can have a copy by writing to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.

Question 3. "Please tell me if hard water is all right to use in canning fruits and vegetables."

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Answer: Miss Mabel Stienbarger who prepared the canning bulletin as a result of long research in canning says: "Very hard water may toughen vegetable tissues or make fruit sirups cloudy. Such water can be partially softened by boiling and straining through several thicknesses of muslin. Or the boiled water may be allowed to stand until the fine precipitate settles, and then the clear water may be poured off for use."

Another listener says she has heard about an instrument called a "saccharometer" and wants to know if she should buy one for canning this summer.

The saccharometer, listeners, is a sugar-tester which measures the concentration of sugar in sirups. If you are canning fruits for sale and your product must measure up to a set standard, you will probably find this instrument very helpful. But in canning for home use, it is not one of the necessary utensils.

A lady who does her canning in glass jars inquires how much space she should leave at the top of the jar when she puts in her vegetables -- or should she fill the jar "right to the brim?"

Answer. When food is canned in glass jars, a headspace is left at the top to allow the food to expand, as it is likely to do during the processing. Allow one-half inch of headspace in all jars except those containing starchy foods such as corn, peas and lima beans. Such starchy vegetables need 1 inch because they expand more than other food. But when you leave this headspace, remember to be sure the solid food in the jars is entirely covered by liquid, either water or sirup, as the case may be. Pieces of fruits or vegetables that stand up above the liquid change in color, flavor, and texture.

Another question. A listener asks why directions for canning advise precooking foods before packing them in containers. She says precooking seems a waste of time since the food is going to be cooked in the containers anyway.

Well, precooking helps the canning process in several ways. For one thing, it drives the air out of the food. For another, it shrinks the food and makes it easier to pack compactly. Then, precooking speeds up the processing because the foods are already hot when they go into the canner.

All fresh foods, you know, contain air within their tissues. In canning in tin, unless most of this air is removed by some means before the cans are sealed, both the food and the can discolor, and the food loses flavor. The nonacid vegetables such as beans, peas, corn, and pumpkin are precooked to drive the air out of the tissues and are then packed boiling hot, and the tin cans are sealed at once and processed.

Last question. "Is it possible to can fruits without sugar successfully?"

Answer: Yes, as far as spoilage is concerned. But sugar helps fruit hold its shape, color, and flavor. Fruits for pie-making or for use in diabetic diets are often canned without sugar. Juicy fruits like berries, cherries, currants and plums should be canned in their own juices when you leave out the sugar. Water is not necessary. Extract the juice from the riper fruits by crushing, heating, and straining. Pack the remaining fruits closely into containers without preheating, and add boiling hot juice to cover. Partially seal glass jars; or exhaust tin cans and seal. Then process. Or give the fruits a short precook -- 2 to 4 minutes simmering, pour into containers at once and process. The less juicy fruits like apples, peaches and pears when canned without sugar need water added. But to preserve the natural fruit flavor, use only the smallest amount of water possible.
