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# HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Tuesday, June 20, 1944.

QUESTION BOX:

How avoid burns in canning?  
Add liquid to jars?  
Invert jars to cool?  
How much water in canner?

ANSWERS FROM:

Canning specialists of the  
U. S. Department of Agriculture

---ooOoo---

And still they come---the canning questions! As usual the canning specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture supply the answers. The questions today bring up little points not always clear in the regular canning directions. Let's take a question about safety to start with.

This woman says: "One of my friends was severely scalded by tipping over a kettle of hot fruit while doing her canning. Please suggest any necessary precautions, as this is my first attempt to can."

Of course home canning calls for the same constant safety precautions that you would use in other cooking. You have to handle heavy, large, hot utensils filled with hot water and hot jars. But you can slide them from one part of the stove to another, instead of lifting them. In canning, as in cooking, you deal with very hot food. You boil sirup to fill fruit jars, dip and scald fruit to peel it, pre-heat foods and transfer them boiling hot into hot jars, blanch vegetables, and so on.

In doing any of this work, be sure to keep handles of saucepans turned away toward the back of the stove so they can't accidentally catch on the clothing of anyone passing, and tip over. Protect your hands with gloves or towels or pot holders, and lift hot jars into and out of the canner with strong tongs, if you have them. If not, dip some of the water out of a boiling water bath canner before you try to take out the hot jars.



Always lift lids of saucepans on the side away from your face, so the steam will not come toward you. Lift the lid of the water bath canner and the steam pressure canner on the far side, too. In emptying hot water from pans or pails, grasp the container so that the steam does not flow up toward your hands or face.

Before you open a steam pressure canner, slide it away from the heat and let the pressure run down to zero. When the gage shows the pressure has returned to zero, wait a minute or two---but not longer--before you open the pet cock. If you wait longer, it's hard to get the lid off. Slowly open the pet cock. Then unfasten the cover and tilt the far side up, so the steam escapes away from you. Use tongs or a thick pot holder to take each jar from the canner, and complete the seal at once if the jars are not self-sealing.

Your best protection from any sort of scalding or burning accident in canning is to work in an orderly way from one step to the next. Have a table or counter cleared and ready to receive the hot jars when you lift them out of the boiling water bath or the steam pressure canner.

Canning specialists have warned against oven canning, because jars may explode and not only wreck the stove, but injure the operator with flying glass or scalding liquid. Another warning: If you can on a kerosene or gasoline stove, never refuel it indoors. Take the tank outside to fill it.

The next question is about adding liquid to jars that are less well filled at the end of the canning period than they were when you started to can them. The canning specialists say to seal the jars just as they are. Lost liquid is lost. If you opened the jar to put in more liquid, you would let in bacteria. Then you'd have to process all over again. Food that is left high and dry above the sirup or liquid in the jars may turn dark, but being dry won't cause it to spoil. Eat such products soon, before they get any darker. Packing without precooking is one cause of empty spaces at the top of jars. Precooking shrinks the food, and enables you to pack more in a jar.



The next question is this: I used to be told to invert jars after canning until they were cold. Now I hear that this is wrong. What do the canning specialists say?"

Cool jars right side up. Give each jar room so that air can get to all sides. Never set a jar on a cold surface, or in a draft. Too sudden cooling may break the jar. On the other hand, don't allow slow down cooling by putting a cloth over jars. This may cause food to spoil.

Another homemaker wants to know how much water she should put in the canner. The canning specialists answer that in a water bath canner, the water must come well up over the jar tops---an inch or two. After setting the jars down on the rack, add boiling water if you need it, to bring the water up to this level. Don't start counting the time until the water comes to a rolling boil again. Add more boiling water if some of it boils away, so as to keep the jar tops always under water.

In a pressure canner, have 2 or 3 inches of boiling water. This is not only to make steam, but to make sure the canner won't boil dry and be damaged.

We'll have plenty more canning questions as the season rolls along, and as different fruits and vegetables ripen. But if you need up-to-date directions for canning, ask your extension agent, or write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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