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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Thursday, July 13, 1944.

QUESTION BOX:

- How can fruit purees?
- How remedy poor seal?
- Worth while to can cabbage or turnips?
- Can fruit without sugar?
- Water get into jars in water bath?

ANSWERS FROM:

Canning specialists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Today's questions are all about canning, and so the canning specialists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture have the floor. To start off, here's a question on canning fruit purees.

"Are there any special directions for canning fruit purees, such as crushed, strained berries or applesauce?"

No special directions, the canning specialists say, except that most fruit purees are a little denser than apples packed in sirup, so you process them a little longer. Applesauce is an exception; 10 minutes in a boiling water bath is long enough to process applesauce packed boiling hot.

For other fruit purees, use, soft, but sound, fruit. Cook the fruit until it is soft enough to put through a fine sieve. Add sugar if you wish---from half a cup to one cup for each gallon of fruit pulp. Heat again to the simmering point. Pack into hot jars. Adjust lids, leaving one-fourth inch head space in each jar. Process in a boiling water bath for 20 minutes, counting time when the surrounding water comes to a rolling boil again.

Next, a question about jars that failed to seal properly. "If I find a jar of canned fruit or canned vegetable with a poor seal when I test them after I've finished canning, what should I do? Throw the food away?"

Canning specialists say that when you test jars for leaks the day after canning, set aside any with a poor seal. You have one of two choices: Use the food up right away. Or can it again. That is, empty the jars, heat the food so you can pack it hot as you did before, pack it loosely in the same or a different jar, and process as if the food were fresh. If the lid caused the trouble, use a new lid. Be sure to wash and boil the jar that didn't seal well, whether you use it over again for the same food or for some other food.

Third question: "Is it worth while to can cabbage or turnips? Generally I store these vegetables."

Home economists do not recommend home canning for everything, and both the vegetables you mention are better stored in root cellars or pits than canned. Cabbage can be canned as sauerkraut. The list of vegetables you don't want to can includes also cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, lettuce, onions, parsnips, and turnips. The flavor and texture of some of these vegetables is poor when you can them at home, and others keep well if properly stored.

So enjoy cauliflower, eggplant, celery and lettuce fresh. You can eat cucumbers fresh, either raw or cooked, or make them into various kinds of pickles. Store cabbage, parsnips, and turnips in root cellars or pits, and put the onions in a dry moderately cool place such as a well-ventilated attic.

Among other foods not recommended for home canning, are baked beans and other dried legumes. These are difficult to can at home. You can easily store dried beans or peas of different kinds and dried soybeans, and prepare them for the table as you want them

And don't try to can vegetable mixtures. It takes special directions for each combination of foods. You can buy commercial packs of such mixtures, but it is more satisfactory in home food preservation to can or store each kind of vegetable separately and combine them later.

The fourth canning question is this; "Could I can some of my fruit without sugar? My father is on a sugarless diet, and I would like to put up some of the

fruit so he can enjoy it."

Yes, the canning specialists say, you can put up part of your fruit without sugar, either to take care of a special diet, or to stretch your sugar supplies further. Sugar helps canned fruit hold its shape, color, and flavor. But sugar isn't necessary to keep fruit from spoiling. You can sweeten the fruit to taste when you open the jars---or not at all, if you need some unsweetened. You process unsweetened fruit exactly the same way as sweetened.

Don't use saccharin, however, in canning food, although many persons who are on a sugarless diet use it to sweeten coffee, tea, and other foods. Saccharin might give the canned fruit a bitter flavor.

If you have to stretch your sugar in canning, you could replace half the sugar called for by mild-flavored honey, or use corn sirup in place of one-third of the sugar. But don't use any sirups that have a strong flavor, and don't use brown sugar or unrefined sorghum. These two "sweet'nin's" may cause food to spoil.

One last canning question: "Why must I cover the jars with an inch or two of water when I can by the water bath method? I should think the water might seep in- to partially sealed jars while they are under water."

If boiling water does not bubble over the jars, the canning specialists explain, spoilage organisms which might be present at the tops of the jars, will not get sufficient heat to be destroyed. Then they may spoil the whole jar of food. A drop in the temperature in the water bath will cause water to be sucked into the jars. So have the water boiling briskly when you put the jars in the canner. And if you have to add water during processing, to keep the level high enough, be sure it is boiling.

That completes our canning questions for today. More as the season goes along.

