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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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Question Box

Reliable directions for home canning
Home-canning supplies in wartime
Put up fruit without sugar?
Bottle juice without sugar?
Honey for jams, jellies and preserves?

Answers From

canning scientists of the
U. S. Department of
Agriculture

--ooOoo--

You'd almost think the good old summertime had arrived to see the dozens of letters about home canning in the mailbag this week. 1942 promises to be a big year for home canning. American housewives are all set to help the country's wartime food situation by putting up generous supplies of food. And this year more than ever they are eager to can with scientific care. No hit-and-miss, careless canning that may mean good food spoiled.

Let's lead off with a question that has come in a good many letters. "Where can I get reliable directions for canning different kinds of fruits and vegetables?"

One answer is: In the free bulletin on home canning published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. The bulletin's complete title is: "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables and Meats, Farmers' Bulletin No. 1762. You can get a copy by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. and just saying: "Please send me the home canning bulletin." (Don't forget to add your name and address.)

Now for Question No. 2--another question many women have been asking. Here's the way one letter puts it: "What are we home canners going to do to get supplies--sugar, for example, or metal jar tops, or cans?"

The answer is: Sugar, tin cans, jars and tops will be made available for home canning through the usual suppliers. That is, from your store or from any other place

where you are used to getting them. Your local rationing board will announce how you are to get additional amounts of sugar for home canning.

Now for the third question from a home canner: Is it possible to can fruit without sugar?"

Canning experts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture say it's quite possible to can fruit without sugar--in fact, fruit often is canned that way for diabetic diets or for pie-making. If you heat the fruit the right length of time and use hot st rile jars, you don't need to worry about spoilage, whether the jar contains any sugar or not. Sugar does help hold the color, flavor and shape of fruit in canning, but sugar is not necessary to prevent spoilage.

If you should have a crop of fruit ready for canning some time this season and not as much sugar as you usually have, you can put up the fruit without sugar and plan to sweeten it later as you use it. It may not hold its shape, or color, or flavor quite as well as if you had used sugar, but it will keep all right.

Here are directions from the canning bulletin for putting up fruit with no sugar: Can juicy fruits--like berries, cherries, currants and plums-- in their own juice rather than with water. First, prepare the juice by sorting out the riper fruit and crushing, heating and straining them. Now pack the rest of the fruit closely into jars or cans without heating and add enough of the boiling hot juice to cover. Now go ahead with the processing just as you do when you can with sugar.

If you prefer to put up fruit by heating it first, here's how: Heat the fruit 2 to 4 minutes at simmering temperature and then put it into containers and seal.

Now about canning fruit that's not so juicy--apples, peaches, or pears-- You must add water to these fruits, but use the smallest possible amount to preserve as much of the natural fruit flavor as you can. When you put up these less juicy fruits without sugar, you just substitute water for the usual sirup; otherwise, can just as you do with sugar.

Now here's a question about putting up fruit juices, without sugar: "Please tell me if it would be safe to bottle fruit juices without sweetening and then add

sugar as needed when you serve the juice."

The answer is: It is quite "safe" to bottle fruit juice without sugar and then add sweetening when you use the juice. In fact, many women do that every year for jelly-making. They bottle the juice in the busy fruit season, and then later, when they have more time, add sugar and make it into jelly. The color and flavor may not be quite so good as when the juice is put up with sugar, especially in the red fruits, and especially if you keep the juice too long. But this is a wise way to save fruit juice when the fruit is ready and your sugar supplies are not.

Here are directions for putting up fruit juice without sugar as given by canning experts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Fill hot sterilized jars with the juice. Partially seal the jars. Place on a rack in a hot bath at 185 degrees Fahrenheit, or at simmering temperature. Keep the heat just below boiling to save all the natural fresh flavor of the juice that you can. Boiling isn't necessary to preserve the juice. Now check to be sure the water covers the jars an inch or two. Bring the water again to simmering temperature, and keep it there for 20 minutes whether the jars are of pint or quart size. After 20 minutes' simmering, complete the seal at once and store the jars in a cool, dry place protected from light.

Last question: "Can you use honey instead of sugar in making jams, jellies, preserves and conserves?"

The answer is: You can use honey for half the sugar called for in jellies, preserves, jams and conserves, but if you use more honey than this, you must expect to mask the delicate flavor of the fruit, and change the color and consistency of the product.

That's all the questions today. More on Thursday.

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