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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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Monday, July 17, 1944

QUESTION BOX:

Worth while to can greens?
How can tomatoes?

ANSWERS FROM:

Canning specialists of the U.S.
Department of Agriculture

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Another batch of canning questions, with answers from the canning specialists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Let's begin with this one, about canning spinach.

"Is it worth while to buy spinach and other greens to can? I understand you can't get more than 8 or 9 quart jars out of a bushel of greens. That is, it takes two or three pounds of spinach or other greens to fill a quart jar."

If you have to buy greens in order to have them for canning, it is rarely worth while doing so. Leafy green vegetables need to be garden fresh to can well, so you would want to buy only local produce and of course at a reasonable price.

But if you grow greens in your Victory Garden, and have more than you can use up fresh during the garden season, it may pay you to save what you can from your home-grown supply. Particularly if you live far from the kind of market that sells fresh vegetables the year around, so that your family is likely to go short on greens. But you might find it still better to plan to save your greens in frozen storage if you can get locker space in a freezer locker plant near your home.

Can spinach and other greens only in the steam pressure canner. And can only freshly picked, tender greens. Pick the leaves over, and wash them thoroughly in several waters. Cut out any tough stems and midribs. Boil in a small amount of water until wilted. Pack hot and loosely. Cover with hot cooking liquid, adding boiling water if needed. Adjust the lids, and process pint jars for 95 minutes, quarts for 105 minutes, at 10 pounds pressure.

The next question is about canning tomatoes. This homemaker is new at canning

but with commercially canned tomatoes back on the ration list, she realizes it is more important than ever for homemakers to can all the tomatoes they can.

"She says. Please tell me how to put up tomatoes?"

Well, the canning specialists say tomatoes are very easy to can. You want to keep the fine red color, tangy flavor, and as much of the vitamin C the tomatoes contain as possible. So work quickly and don't undertake to handle more than you are able to prepare easily at any one time. Here are the directions given in the new canning leaflet prepared by the home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And by the way, if you haven't sent for this leaflet yet, write to the Department for a copy immediately. The number is AWI-93, and the title is "Home Canning of Fruits and Vegetables." It will save you time and prevent mistakes, no matter what you are canning.

You can tomatoes in a boiling water bath. For this you need a big clean vessel deep enough to let water boil over the jars, with a good lid and a rack to keep jars off the bottom. Look over every tomato. Use only the ripe, firm, and perfect ones. Even if you cut out a bad spot, bacteria might be left and they would ruin the whole batch. Very ripe tomatoes that have no bad spots you can set aside to make juice to fill up the jars.

Wash the tomatoes clean in several waters. Don't bruise them in handling them. Prepare only enough for one canner load at a time. Put the washed tomatoes in a wire basket or thin cloth, and dip them into boiling water for about a minute, to loose the skins. Then dip them quickly into cold water and they will be easy to peel. Cut out the stem ends and peel the tomatoes. Quarter them so they'll heat through quickly. Heat the tomatoes without adding water. They will soon provide enough juice of their own. Stir them while they heat, and let them come to a rolling boil. Meantime, heat clean jars and lids.

When you are ready to pack, take one jar at a time from hot water, and fill with hot tomatoes. A funnel is handy for this. Cover with hot juice to within

half an inch of the top of the jar. Add a teaspoonful of salt to each quart. Do all this work fast, so the tomatoes won't cool. Take a knife blade and work out any air bubbles in the jar. Add more hot juice if you need to, to have the jar filled to half an inch from the top. Wipe the jar rim with a clean damp cloth. A speck of food on the rim might prevent an airtight seal and cause the tomatoes to spoil.

Fit a hot wet rubber ring on the jar or the glass lid, depending on the kind of jar you are using. Self-sealing lids have the rubber on the metal disk. Put on the lid, and adjust the closing according to the type of jar. Put the jars into the canner as soon as you fill them. Have the water in the canner deep enough to come one or two inches over the tops of the jars. Put on the canner lid. When the water in the canner boils hard, start counting the time, and process 10 minutes. That is, if you live at sea level. If you live higher than sea level, process one minute longer for each 1,000 feet of altitude.

When the time is up, take out one jar at a time and if the jar isn't a self-sealer, quickly complete the seal. Cool the jars top side up, on a thick cloth or paper. While cooling, keep the jars well apart and out of drafts. Next day, remove the screw bands if you used that type of jar. Don't force the bands to get them off. If they stick, cover for a minute or two with a hot damp cloth to loosen. Store the jars in a cool, dry, dark place. So much for the way to can tomatoes. And remember, whether you buy fresh tomatoes or raise your own, can all you can.

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