homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

QUESTION-BOX

: Can sauerkraut? :
: Preserves from Pear-Shaped Tomatoes? :
: What spices for catsup? :
: Why catsup won't keep? :

Tuesday, September 16, 1941

Answers from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and scientists of the New York State Experiment Station.

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Letters from housewives putting up food for winter are still filling up the mailbag.

The first question is about putting up sauerkraut. "Please tell me," the letter says, "whether sauerkraut can be canned after fermenting."

The answer is: Yes, sauerkraut is very easy to can. Here are the directions from the bulletin on "Home Canning" published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture: Be sure sauerkraut is well fermented before it is canned. Heat the kraut to simmering--that is, to about 180 degrees Fahrenheit, but don't let it boil. When you have heated it to simmering, fill it hot into the containers and pack closely. Cover with the hot sauerkraut juice. Fill up to an eighth or a fourth-inch of the top of the container. Process in a boiling water bath. Pint glass jars need 25 minutes in boiling water; quart glass jars 30 minutes. If you're canning in tin, No. 2 cans need 15 minutes in boiling water; No. 3 cans 30 minutes.

Now here's the second question. A housewife says: "I have been told that the little yellow pear-shaped tomatoes make good preserves. Will you tell me whether this is true?"

The answer is: The small yellow or red pear-shaped tomatoes make delicious preserves combined with lemon and gingerroot. Here is the recipe given in the bulletin on "Homemade Jellies, Jams and Preserves", also published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The bulletin says you can make tomato preserves with or

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without the skins of the tomatoes. Making it without the skins is a little more difficult. You must dip the tomatoes first in boiling water, then in cold water, and remove the skins first. Then you need to handle the tomatoes with extra care so they won't go all to pieces during preserving.

Of course, you want to use firm perfect tomatoes. And, of course, you wash and drain them to begin with. Then remove the skins if you want to, or leave them on--as you please. To each pound of tomatoes allow three-fourths cup of water..... three-fourths pound of sugar.....one-fourth lemon, sliced thin.....and one piece of gingerroot. Boil the lemon for 5 minutes in part of the water. Boil the rest of the water with the sugar for 5 minutes to make a sirup. Add the tomatoes, the gingerroot, the lemon and the liquid in which the lemon was cooked. Then boil until the tomatoes are clear and the sirup somewhat thick. Remove the scum; then pour the preserves at once into hot sterilized jars and seal.

No here are a couple of questions about catsup. First question: "What are the best spices to use in homemade catsup?"

The New York State Experiment Station gives this list for a mildly spiced catsup: celery seed, mustard seed, cinnamon, paprika, a bit of cayenne pepper and sliced or chopped onion. The New York scientists say paprika doesn't add much to the flavor of catsup but is useful in adding bright red color. The scientists also say you'll have a better-looking catsup if you avoid spices that darken the color of the catsup, such as allspice, black pepper or cloves.

Here's another question about catsup: "Can you tell me why the tomato catsup I make won't keep from spoiling after the bottle is opened, while my neighbor's catsup, made by the same recipe, keeps until it is used up?"

The answer to this question comes from scientists at the New York State Experiment Station. They say the right combination of sugar, salt and vinegar will

produce delicious catsup that does not spoil. But many people don't get the right combination, because they add the vinegar too early in the catsup-making process. If you add vinegar early, much of it boils away in the cooking, and then there is not enough to make the catsup keep. The New York scientists find that you get best results by adding the vinegar---as well as the salt and pepper---to the catsup not more than 5 minutes before the end of the cooking period.

Here's another point to help you make good catsup: Use very strong vinegar--preferably a redistilled vinegar of 10 percent acid. This strong vinegar sometimes is called "100 grain" vinegar.

That's all the questions for today. This is just a reminder that you are still welcome to the bulletin on canning, and the bulletin on preserving. Just write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for "Home Canning", Farmers' Bulletin No. 1762, or "Homemade Jellies, Jams and Preserves", Farmers' Bulletin No. 1800. As long as the free supply lasts, a postcard with your address will bring them to you.

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