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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, September 14, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "Questions." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

The letter on top of the heap today is what Uncle Ebenezer would call a "poser." A lady who is doing home canning this year for the first time wants to know some of the different mistakes in canning that might lead to spoilage. That's a good question but a difficult one. If you got me started on the queer things some women do when they start canning, I'm likely to go on talking all night. The safe way to can is to get a reliable canning guide from your State College or from the Bureau of Home Economics at Washington, D. C. and follow that as though it were the laws of the Medes and Persians.

But perhaps we might all profit by a little check on our canning methods, by reviewing some of the things that are likely to lead to spoilage. In these economy days, none of us can afford spoilage in the foods we work so hard to can. We can't afford to waste good food, time, or effort. Many families are canning by budget these days, a fine step toward health and economy if the canning is properly done. These families count definitely on their canned supplies to carry them through the winter. If the foods spoil, this means serious loss to them. The loss of even a few cans upsets their careful schedule. And spoilage isn't necessary when canning is no longer a matter of hit-and-miss luck, but a careful science, and when every home canner can have help from reliable sources.

Well, let's check briefly over some of the reasons why your home-canned foods might spoil.

First, you might choose poor products for canning. The specialists have good reason for insisting on sound, fresh, ripe but not too ripe fruits and vegetables, and for urging rapid work in canning from the time the products come from the garden to the time when they're all sealed away in containers. You can't afford to use stale products; you can't afford to use unsound products -- even those with just a few slight blemishes; you can't afford to use over-ripe products. Any of these are good reasons for spoilage. And a few imperfect pieces may spoil the whole batch.

We've mentioned before that products for canning mustn't stand and wait in closed containers or in a warm room before canning. Spoilage organisms seem to just enjoy growing in such an environment. Don't gather your garden products until you are ready to can them. And when you gather them, get them into the canner as soon as possible. Delay is a common cause of spoilage -- delay before canning, delay during any of the steps in the process, delay in processing the food once you get it in the containers. To prevent delay, can only a little food at a time.

Still another cause of spoilage is filling the containers with warm instead of boiling liquid.

Another frequent reason of spoilage is too little heat for sterilizing. Sometimes the heat doesn't penetrate a very tight or full pack, especially of beans, corn, greens or peas. Sometimes the processing period is too short for the heat to sterilize. In using the boiling water bath, you may make the mistake of not having the water boiling when the containers go in, or of not keeping the water boiling steadily through the processing. Sometimes you may start counting the processing time too soon -- before the water has come to a boil after the containers go in. Another case of too little heat is when such non-acid foods as vegetables, meats, poultry and fish aren't processed in a pressure cooker. Sometimes you neglect to drive all the air out of the pressure cooker before closing the pet cock. Sometimes you begin to count the processing time before the gauge registers the necessary pressure. Sometimes the pressure fluctuates.

Another frequent cause of spoilage is an imperfect seal on containers which lets spoilage organisms in. That's why, for safety's sake, the specialists recommend testing the seal on every jar and lid for leaks before you use them. Reasons for an imperfect seal might be that you used poor rubbers, old rubbers or two rubbers on one jar; that you used containers that had particles of food or grease on the sealing surface; or that the rubber rings weren't flat because the wire bail pressed against them. Or perhaps you didn't hold the lid steady when you were adjusting the screw band. Or perhaps you lifted the jars by the tops or carelessly tipped them after processing. Or finally, perhaps you didn't tighten the jar lids until after the jars were cool. Lots of ways to get an unsafe seal.

Sometimes spoilage reasons occur after processing. The jars may cool too slowly. You may store away the jars before they are cold. Or you may keep them in too warm a place -- near steam pipes, furnaces and so on.

Now that recipe I promised you yesterday -- a recipe for stuffed baked egg plant. Eight ingredients:

1 large eggplant	1 small onion, finely chopped
4 tablespoons of pork fat	1 cup of cooked string beans, peas or
1 cup of diced salt pork, cooked	other left-over cooked vegetables
until crisp and drained of fat	1 teaspoon of salt, and
1½ cups of bread crumbs	A little pepper.

Once more. (REPEAT)

Wash and cut the eggplant in half lengthwise. Remove as much of the white pulp as possible without breaking the shell. Cut the pulp in small pieces and cook in a small quantity of hot water for ten minutes or until tender. Drain. To the melted fat add the crumbs. Mix thoroughly, and reserve about one-half of the crumbs for the top. Add the remaining crumbs and other ingredients and the eggplant pulp. Pile lightly into the shells. Sprinkle the top with the reserved crumbs. Place in a shallow baking dish. Pour a few tablespoons of hot water around the shells to keep them from sticking. Bake in a moderate oven for 30 minutes or until the crumbs are golden brown. Serve in the baking dish.

TOMORROW: "Using Your Green Tomatoes."

