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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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Subject: "PEACHES FOR CANNING." Information from Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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PEACHES!--They're plentiful on the market--popular on the menu--and 43 points in the can!

THAT--as any homemaker could guess--is a cook's eye view of the peach situation. There's no doubt about it--Dame Nature CAN be a lady--and Lady Bountiful at that--if she's a mind! Proof of that--if you please--is the bumper peach crop that's moving to market. To peach producers and home pantry packers--that's a boon with a bonus! And not a minute too soon, either--considering last year's short crop and the current high point value of peaches in the can.

Yes--the parade of peaches from packing sheds to pantry shelves shows promise of becoming an impressive procession before the season's end. Especially so since government estimates indicate that supplies of commercially canned peaches will be something over a million cases SHORTER than last year's supply.

But then peaches are almost a pushover when it comes to putting them in jars headed for the pantry. It's not a hard process to begin with--and then there are always a few tricks of the trade to insure a better canned product and reduce spoilage possibilities.

For example--the real canny home canner will faithfully follow such pointers as careful selection, gentle handling, precooking, and precisely-timed processing.

If you're one of the home canners who're a little rusty on the peach-canning process, here are a few reminders from the canning specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to refresh your memory.

The first step, of course, is selecting your peaches. I'm sure you haven't forgotten that the telltale mark of the green peach is not the presence or absence of a rosy blush, but the background color. If the background color is out and out green, you've a green peach on your hands. The background color of ripe peaches--on the other hand--is whitish or yellowish--depending on the variety--or--whether it's a white or yellow peach.

But seeing that the peaches are ripe is just part of the process of selecting them for canning. It's just as important to see that they're not ~~OVER~~ripe, and that they ARE free from disease or insect injury. Round brown spots are sure signs of decay. Don't take a chance on decay spots! Even when they're cut out, bacteria may remain to spoil the rest.

All these do's and don't's add up to this simple summary of the ideal canning peach: Select peaches that are well colored, fresh, firm, and free of blemish.

As for the actual steps in the canning process, here's a brief review.

Select only enough for one canner load at a time. Wash the peaches well; AND, be sure to lift them out of the water so they won't bruise.

For easy peeling, dip the peaches in boiling water about a minute or two, then dip quickly into cold water. It's easy to dip the peaches into the boiling water, you know, if you'll just put them in a wire basket or a square of cheesecloth.

After that--all that remains to the peeling, is slipping off the skins. When that's done, remove the peach pits and slice the peaches or cut them into halves. And at that stage in the game, your peaches may change color if you aren't careful! You CAN keep them from acquiring a sudden suntan, though. Just doctor up a gallon of water with two tablespoons of salt and two of vinegar and plump the peaches into this mixture as soon as they're peeled, pitted, and halved, or sliced. Remove them from this solution in about two minutes and precook.

If you're canning with sugar, add the sugar to juicy fruit just before cooking. If the peaches aren't juicy--and you're canning them with sugar--you'll want to

precook the peaches in a sugar sirup. OR--if you're canning without sugar--and peaches are often canned that way--cook the fruit in its own juice--or add just enough hot water to keep the peaches from sticking to the pan.

In the meantime--while the fruit is precooking I mean--heat the clean jars and lids. Then pack the peaches loosely in the jars, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch air headspace. Be sure to use a good proportion of liquid to solid--or about three-fourths to one cup of liquid to each quart jar. Work out the air bubbles by running a knife blade down the sides of the jar.

Wipe the top of the jar and put on the lid or closure--following the directions applying to the type of closure you're using.

That leaves only the processing--and, as you know--for peaches--that's done by a boiling water bath. Use a deep container with a wire or wooden rack on the bottom and be sure that the jars are covered by water well over their tops. When the water comes to a rolling boil, start counting the minutes. Process 20 minutes for either quart or pint jars at sea level--and longer at higher altitudes.

During the processing, it's important to keep the heat even under the canner. If the temperature drops, the liquid may be drawn out of the jars.

When the processing time is up, take out the jars, finish sealing if the type of jar requires, and set the jars to cool, right side up on thick cloth or paper--and away from drafts.

Well--that's the process for canning peaches. Just in case you've missed any of the details, you'll find them in a new illustrated leaflet available free from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Just write for AWI Publication No. 93, "Home Canning of Fruits and Vegetables."

And by the way--just in case you've forgotten this point--you can expect to get from 18 to 24 quarts of canned peaches from each bushel you put up.

