

## **CANNING AND PRESERVING FOOD**

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Writer: Martha Filipic (filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu 614-292-9833)

Source: Doris Herringshaw, OSU Extension, Family and Consumer Sciences

"We're working hard on our vegetable garden this year and I want to do some food preservation (freezing or maybe even canning) so we can enjoy our harvest well into winter. How can I make sure I'm doing it right?"

Canning or freezing home-grown vegetables is a great idea. For novices, most experts recommend freezing over canning. As long as you have plenty of freezer space, this option requires very little initial investment and is a simple and convenient way to preserve vegetables. Freezing also helps vegetables keep fresher flavor than home-canning does.

Canning vegetables is becoming more popular, though, as more people try to find ways to cut grocery costs. If your current freezer space is limited, buying canning supplies would be cheap compared to buying a new freezer, and, of course, canned goods don't need to be kept cold, thus saving utility costs over freezing.

But canning must be done properly: The risk of botulism is a serious one. Interestingly, the *Clostridium botulinum* bacterium is harmless until it finds itself in a moist, low-acid, oxygen-free environment or a partial vacuum. That's exactly the kind of conditions found inside a jar of canned vegetables, and it's why following proper canning procedures is vitally important.

Ohio State University Extension has recently updated its food preservation fact sheets, which are available for free download on <http://ohioline.osu.edu> (click on "Food," then "Food Preservation"). Topics offered include canning and freezing basics; specific guidelines on canning or freezing vegetables, fruits, and meat, poultry and game; canning tomatoes, tomato products and salsa; freezing combination main dishes; and making homemade jams, jellies, fruit spreads and pie fillings.

In addition, the National Center for Home Food Preservation, hosted by the University of Georgia, offers in-depth information on canning, freezing and other preservation methods. Go to <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/> and take a look around. Anyone interested in starting to can should definitely review the "General Information" on the "How Do I Can?" page. It offers general safety guidelines, recommendations on jars and lids, and helpful information on using boiling water and pressure canners.

It should be noted that most vegetables are low-acid and require a pressure canner for canning; boiling water canners simply cannot get hot enough to destroy microorganisms in low-acid foods. You can use a boiling water canner for tomatoes as long as proper acidification measures are taken; follow official canning guidelines to the letter.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu). This column was reviewed by Doris Herringshaw, Ohio State University Extension educator in family and consumer sciences.*

Local Information: Ohio State University Extension recommends that dial-type pressure canner gauges be tested annually for accuracy before using the canner. National Presto Industries offers servicing and gauge testing, call for more details: 1-800-877-0441. Call one of the following OSU Extension offices about pressure canner testing, and for special food preservation assistance and questions: Huron County 419-668-8219; Wood County 419-354-9050; Ottawa County 419-898-3631.

For more information on Ohio State University Extension food preservation fact sheets please call 419-747-8755.