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## **MY FIRST TIME USING A PRESSURE CANNER**

**By Sue Hale**

**UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County**

Do you have lots of fresh green beans? Would you rather can them or freeze them? Join the UCCE Master Food Preservers on Saturday, August 9th or Tuesday, August 12th for a free class. The MFPs will share recipes and techniques for safe home pressure canning.

In 2013 my husband completed the UCCE Master Gardener certification and was so excited about what he learned, he wanted me to take the course as well. I decided I wanted to take the Master Food Preservers Volunteer Training Program instead. It seemed like a nice fit, and I could learn how to use a pressure canner. I was quite intimidated by pressure canners. Whenever my mom would use the pressure canner, we were always warned to be careful and stay away from it. "Don't bump the weight and watch out for the steam!"

Last year I had a bumper crop of green beans and it's the same for this year. In previous years I froze them, but I prefer the taste of canned green beans. I had done boiling water bath canning in the past, but I knew green beans needed to be done in a pressure canner.

This spring I completed the Master Food Preservers Volunteer Training Program and learned the why of pressure canning – green beans are a low acid food and do not contain enough acidity to prevent the growth of heat resistant bacteria. Low acid foods must be processed at 240 to 250 degrees – it needs to be in a pressure canner, not just a boiling water bath. Pressure canning brings them to a high enough temperature to destroy harmful microorganisms that cause botulism and other types of food spoilage. Regular water bath canning does not do this.

But let's go back to last summer - I went home on vacation and watched my mom pressure can her green beans. She walked me through the steps to include making sure the canner lid was on correctly and how to read the gauges. It seemed simple enough – just follow the instructions. Silly me, I should have taken notes! When I got back here and read through it, I had so many questions – "Really? Only that much water?! Shouldn't this thing be full of water?" "NO! And do I really need to add extra time for altitude?" YES! So I asked my mom and an experienced friend and got the clarification I needed. Then I did a test run of using the canner, just to get used to the

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operation. There was only water in the canner, so I could see how long it takes to reach pressure, what it sounds like, how to know when it is finished, etc. The instructions also walked me through checking the seals and other safety measures. I am happy to say, I successfully canned several batches of green beans last year in my pressure canner and am now very comfortable with it. And now I also know that there is a Master Food Preservers link for the public to ask questions as well on their website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmfpl>!

All pressure canners should be inspected and dial gauges tested annually. The UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County provide FREE pressure canner inspections and testing. Drop your pressure canner off at our office at 311 Fair Lane, Placerville, CA and a volunteer will inspect it and test it.

This year's annual series of FREE classes are on both Tuesday's and Saturday's from 10 a.m. to noon in the El Dorado County Fairground's Boardroom at 100 Placerville Drive in Placerville. Download our schedule of classes and directions here:

[http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master\\_Food\\_Preservers/Classes/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/Classes/).

Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message on our hotline - (530) 621-5506. For more information about the public education classes and activities, go to the UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County website at [http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master\\_Food\\_Preservers/](http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/). Sign up to receive our Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>. You can also find us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/El-Dorado-County-Master-Food-Preservers/456649991034665>.