



Welcome to *Preserving Times*, the newsletter created by the Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County to bring you interesting information from the world of safe home food preservation. We hope you enjoy this inaugural issue.

Appropriate Containers for Canning

For water bath canning and pressure canning, be sure to use equipment that can handle the job. When it comes to jars, use those manufactured specifically for home canning. Check each jar carefully for nicks, cracks or abnormalities, as these can cause the jar to break during canning.

Use jars with lids and rings for pressure canning and water bath canning, and be sure to use each lid only once. The jars and rings may be reused as long as each is in good condition.



Some foods that you can buy from the grocery store come in jars that seem to be alright to reuse for home canning. Don't! Even the spaghetti jars that look like regular canning jars are not ok to use. The manufacturer of the sauce says that the jars are not thick enough to stand up to home canning.

What about all those pretty jars? Save these for storing home-made vinegar. Just be sure that the lids are in good condition and that the jars are free from cracks, nicks or chips.



In fact, now would be a good time to start looking for unusually shaped or otherwise interesting jars for home-made vinegar as Christmas gifts!



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Botulism Problems with Canned Food Still a Concern

Dr. Ben Chapman is an assistant professor and food safety extension specialist at North Carolina State University. He hopes to educate the public about the dangers of unsafe food handling practices.



Here is an excerpt from his internet blog demonstrating the importance of proper canning techniques.

“Yesterday I received a question from an extension agent about some exploding jars of home canned salsa. The agent said that a new canning enthusiast made the salsa without following a tested recipe, and omitted the addition of vinegar. Vinegar is important in home canned salsa as it lowers the pH and changes the environment so *Clostridium botulinum* spores can't germinate and produce toxin.

Two weeks later, not only does the dude have a mess in his pantry but he's also increased the risk that bot toxin has been spewed around his house. Not all the jars exploded, just a couple, so the canner wondered if the remaining jars were safe to eat (they aren't). He didn't want to throw out the fruits of his labor, but also didn't want to make people sick, so he checked with the resource person in his county. That's good.

Botulism problems with home canned products aren't new at all. Dave Olsen of the Fargo-Moorhead Forum wrote today about a tragic 1931 botulism outbreak that killed 12 people in Grafton ND (that's fairly close to Canada). The deaths were linked to improperly canned peas that were served at a dinner party hosted by Edward and Delphine Hein.

Delphine served a salad sprinkled with peas she had canned herself. Within days, 12 people and later a 13th would fall ill and die, including the Heins and three of their six children.

Three Hein children, Richard (Dick), Marvin (Bud) and Wilfred (Bill), were too young to attend the party and spent the evening in their rooms.

“That was a lucky break for us,” said Dick Hein, who is now 94 and lives in Detroit Lakes. His brother, Bud, is 84 and lives in Grand Forks.

Bill Hein, who was 12 years old when the three brothers missed the party that fateful night, died about five years ago, Bud Hein said.

After the tragedy, the three boys found separate homes with aunts and uncles, though Dick Hein said he soon became restless and moved out to work as a laborer for farmers in the area.

Hein, who has three sons of his own, said the parents he lost all those years ago are always near his thoughts, as are two sisters, a brother and a cousin who died from eating the salad.

The two surviving Hein brothers say they had to grow up quickly following their parents' deaths.

A front-page story in the Walsh County Record from Feb. 5, 1931, described the 13 deaths as the worst tragedy in North Dakota's history.

A back-page story quoted a then 14-year-old Dick Hein as asking: “Please, will you see that our mother's wedding ring is saved so that we will have something to remember her by?”

“If only one of our sisters had lived,” the boy added, “then we could have continued to operate the farm as our father has in the past.””

Always follow directions and use the correct techniques when canning any type of food!

Pickle Time

Ora Emmerich, MFP

Well, it's that time of year again. Every summer my husband and I set aside a few days to make pickles. We have a great recipe for a garlic, jalepeno dill pickle that everyone seems to love, so we make pickles.

Lots of pickles. Last year we canned 96 jars of pickles, and we have, let's see, oh yeah, NONE left! We give out pickles for Christmas, pickles for birthdays, and pickles for thank you presents. We get letters from strangers asking for a jar of our pickles....they had a taste at a friend's house and must have their own jar! So, once again, we prepare for the pickle days.

First, we have to secure the supplies. We call around town and find a good price on the pickling cucumbers, jalepenos and dill. We set the pick up day. Then, we get a large jar of peeled garlic cloves. One year, there were no large jars of garlic available, so our daughters spent the greater part of a Saturday peeling garlic. Now, they offer to find the peeled garlic and will even ride their bikes to the store to pick it up. So helpful! After laying in the vinegar and pickling salt, we're ready to begin.



I make the brine on the stove in the house, so that leaves the outside patio for the big guy to set up the boiling water bath canner. He is the king of timing, and he does a great job with his stopwatch and thermometer. We use a propane ring originally bought for turkey frying. Since we no longer eat turkey, the ring has become one of our canning supplies.

Everyone pitches in, even the daughters who have left home and are living on their own. You see, in order to go home with a few jars of pickles, they must participate. Everyone finds a job...some clean the produce, some cut the jalepenos, some stuff the jars and some fill and seal. Only the big guy is allowed to work the propane ring, however. I think it's because he can do this sitting down! We usually work the entire day, sometimes two days. In the end, our outdoor tables are filled with beautiful jars of cooling pickles. It's a lot of work, but throughout the year, as I proudly hand out our delicious pickles, I know that it was all worth it.

Name That Veggie Quiz

See if you can name this vegetable. The answer is on [page 7](#).

1. High in vitamin A
2. A dark green lettuce
3. Had its start as a Mediterranean weed
4. Has a long, loaf-shaped head of sturdy leaves



Fruit of the Month: Persimmons

The CDC program, [Fruits and Veggies...More Matters](#) highlights different fruits and veggies that can be added to your diet to improve your health. This month, persimmons take the stage as the fruit to try. The CDC website explains that.....



Fuyu Persimmons

“Persimmons origins go back to ancient China. Fate intervened in the 1880’s when a United States Commander brought back a native Japanese persimmon variety to Washington, D.C. Now, persimmons are grown in California where hundreds of different varieties flourish. This brightly colored, glossy orange red skinned fruit is an excellent source of vitamin A, a good source of vitamin C, and rich in fiber.

Although there are countless different varieties of persimmons, only two are commercially available. They are distinguishable by their shape.

Hachiya: This type of persimmon makes up approximately 90 percent of the available fruit. It is identifiable by its acorn like shape. This persimmon is tart until it becomes soft ripe.

Fuyu: This persimmon is gaining popularity here, as it is in Japan. Similar in color, but looking like a squashed tomato, this variety is smaller, sweeter, and is edible while still firm.

Availability, Selection, Storage, Preparation

Persimmons are widely available September through December, with a peak during November. Choose persimmons with deep red undertones. Look for persimmons that are round, plump, and have glossy and smooth skin. Avoid fruits with blemishes, bruises or cracked skin and missing the green leaves at the top. Select ripe persimmons only if you plan to eat them immediately. Otherwise, buy firmer fruits and allow them to ripen.

Ripen persimmons at room temperature in a paper bag with an apple or banana. Store them in the refrigerator when ripe. Be sure to eat the fruit as soon as possible because overripe persimmons quickly turn to a mushy texture.

Ripe Fuyu persimmons, which look kind of like flattened tomatoes, will be crisp, while the acorn-shaped Hachiya persimmons will be very soft and juicy. Unripe Hachiya persimmons taste very bitter and will suck all the moisture from your mouth — not very pleasant. The tartness will go away as the fruit ripens.”

Persimmon and Apple Salad

Makes 6 servings; each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables

- 1 Tbsp walnut pieces, toasted
- 2 Tbsp orange juice
- 1 Tbsp sherry vinegar
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 3 sweet variety apples, rinsed, cored, and thinly sliced lengthwise
- 3 firm-ripe Fuyu persimmons, rinsed, stemmed, and thinly sliced lengthwise



Hachiya Persimmons

In a bowl, combine orange juice, vinegar, and olive oil. Add apples, persimmons, and toasted walnuts and mix to coat.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 90, Protein 0g, Fat 3g, Calories From Fat 29%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 16g, Fiber 3g, Sodium 15mg.

Vacuum Packaging

Ora Emmerich, MFP

All right, admit it, there is something very cool about sucking all the air out of a bag of food. When the hum of the vacuum machine starts, all eyes watch to see the crinkly plastic settle down and embrace the curves of whatever type of cheese, meat, vegetable or fruit resides inside the clinging sheets of food grade plastic. The rock hard result looks as though it could last forever. Do not be fooled.



Safe preservation of food at home keeps pathogens low and prevents illness. Among the many methods of preserving food, vacuum packaging keeps food safe longer, but cannot substitute for safe food handling processes nor for safe storage practices. Removing the air from the storage container removes the air necessary for spoilage organisms to grow, but remember that not all pathogens require air to multiply.

The organisms responsible for the tell-tale signs of spoiled food, such as color change, bad odor or slimy feeling usually require air to multiply, so packing food in vacuum bags slows these processes. However, some pathogens, or disease causing organisms, such as botulism, actually prefer a low-oxygen environment and will reproduce quickly at room temperature in a moist, low-acid food when deprived of air.



Begin vacuum packaging with the usual safe food handling concerns. Be sure to wash your hands and all food preparation surfaces. Prepare the food for packaging and follow the manufacturer's directions for properly vacuum packaging the product. If the food to be packaged needs to be refrigerated, package and then return the food promptly to the refrigerator or freezer.



Discard any perishable food that has been vacuum packed and left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours. This includes vacuum packed food that has been frozen and left to thaw at room temperature. The vacuum packing retards the growth of the organisms which usually spoil food. When these organisms cannot compete with the pathogens that do not require oxygen, then there seems to be even more opportunity for these anaerobic organisms to multiply. Always thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator at 40°F or below. It will take longer to thaw, but will be safer.

If the vacuum packed food shows any signs of spoilage or if perishable, vacuum packed food has been left out above 40° for two hours or more, throw it out. Do not take chances with food safety!



Dry, non-perishable foods such as crackers or nuts can safely be stored in vacuum pack bags. These foods do not have enough moisture to allow bacteria to grow rapidly. Just be careful that the vacuum packaging process does not crush the food! Cracker crumbs have many uses, but may not be your desired result.

When determining the amount of food to put in each container, think about the end use. Pack only enough in each bag to use the entire amount at once. Once you open a vacuum packed bag, the oxygen that enters the food resumes the deterioration processes. Use all the food and try to avoid resealing.



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Free Food Preservation Classes



Classes are from 10–12 at the Bethell-Delfino Agriculture Building, 311 Fair Lane, Placerville

Learn the art and science of safely preserving food at home. Join us for our final three classes of 2011. Classes are on Tuesdays from **10am to Noon**. There is no charge and no reservations are required. Call 530-621-5502 for more information.

October 11 Cranberries, Pumpkin & Turkey

Join the Master Food Preservers for recap of the many food preservation processes presented throughout the summer and fall as they prepare delectable delights for a Thanksgiving dinner party. You'll learn to can your own cranberry sauce, use leftover pumpkin to make pumpkin leather, whip up a batch of pineapple cranberry freezer jam, brine a turkey, and can turkey stock to use in soups long after the Thanksgiving feast is over. (We'll also show you how to dehydrate a holiday treat for your dog.) Home food preservers will have plenty of time to get the fixings ready for the big Thanksgiving feast using the many tips presented in this class. The class handout has even more recipes for you to try.

October 18 Olives

Fish-eye, foaming, softening and gas pockets...what do all of these have in common? These terms, used for various problems occurring during the preservation of olives, strike fear into the hearts of most home olive preservers. Not, however, that of Bernie Ritscher, 26 year veteran Master Food Preserver for the University of California Cooperative Extension in El Dorado County. Bernie shares his many years of expertise in home food preservation at a free public class titled "Olives." From which types of olives to pick to what containers to use, Bernie and the other MFP volunteers explain exactly how to process olives safely at home.

October 25 Persimmons, Kiwi & Nuts

The class, "Persimmons, Kiwi and Nuts" features seasoned Master Food Preserver volunteers demonstrating preserving techniques and giving great advice on just what to do with all those nuts (and persimmons and kiwi). (Sing along ... Chestnuts roasting on an open fire ...) When your neighbor offers you a bag of persimmons, you'll have several preservation techniques in your culinary repertoire, because no matter how hard you try, there is a limit to the number of fresh persimmons you can eat. Give yourself the luxury of persimmons and kiwi throughout the winter by preserving them.

Vacuum Packaging *Continued from page 5*

Freezing vegetables in vacuum packed bags keeps the produce safe from freezer burn and deterioration. The University of Missouri recommends the following process for freezing green beans:



Beans: green, snap or wax



Select young tender pods when the seed is first formed. Wash in cold water and cut into 1-inch or 2-inch pieces or slice lengthwise. Water blanch 3 minutes. Cool promptly, drain, package, seal and freeze.

Seal into individual bags with just enough beans for each meal, and enjoy the taste of delicious green beans in recipes or with dips. Be sure to thaw in the refrigerator or drop frozen beans directly into boiling water to cook. Freezing keeps the fresh taste and color, and sealing in the vacuum packages allows safe storage in the freezer.

Master Food Preserver Program

The Master Food Preserver (MFP) program started in 1980 and continues today with dedicated volunteers who are trained to assist the county Extension staff in providing up-to-date food preservation information to the citizens of El Dorado County. There are presently 70 volunteers who give at least 35 volunteer hours throughout the year to serve the El Dorado community.

What do MFP Volunteers do?

- Answer food preservation telephone and walk-in inquiries throughout the year.
- Work in the community as local food preservation specialists.
- Staff information booths and lead food preservation demonstrations at the El Dorado County Fair and local events.
- Teach classes throughout the summer and fall on food preservation topics at the UC Cooperative Extension office.

Interested in becoming a Master Food Preserver and volunteering your time to teaching our community safe home food preservation techniques? [Click here](#) for more information about joining. Our next volunteer training session begins in March 2012.

<h3 style="margin: 0;">Master Food Preserver Services:</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly free public classes during the summer and fall • Food preservation hotline • Free pressure canner testing • Speakers for custom training for your organization • Weekly articles in the Mt. Democrat newspaper 	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Master Gardener Classes</h3> <p>Join our fellow educators at a Master Gardener class at the Veterans Memorial Building in Placerville.</p> <p>October 15: Citrus in Marginal Areas 22: Propagation II 29: Holiday House Plants</p> <p>November 5: Roses—Selection & Planting 19: Berries</p>
<p>Preserving Times is published by the El Dorado County Master Food Preservers. Editor: Ora Emmerich</p> <p><i>Know someone who would like to receive our newsletters and notifications on classes and events? Sign up online at http://ucanr.org/mfpenews.</i></p>	<p>Answer to Name that Veggie Quiz on page 3: Romaine Lettuce</p>  



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