



Happy canning and preserving to all!

We will resume our free public classes in July. Until then, we'll share seasonal information to help keep your food safe as short-term leftovers, long-term treasures, or gifts of your time and talent for friends and family.

## Pepper Planning

*Ora Emmerich, El Dorado County Master Food Preserver*

Many of us are ready and itching to get out in the dirt and plant gardens full of wonderful summer produce. Peppers frequently top the list of easy to grow veggies, and with all of the varieties available, planting enough to ensure extras for "putting up" will be no problem.

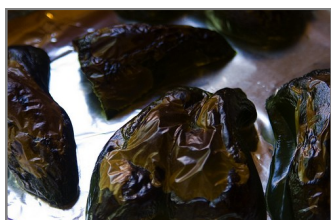
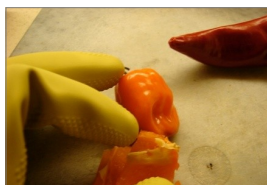
Peppers are also easy to preserve. The easiest method is to simply wash the pepper, cut in half, take out the stem and seeds and package the pepper raw in a freezer bag or container, leaving no headspace. Freeze. This method is the best when you want to have a crisper pepper when defrosted.

You can also freeze blanched peppers, if you plan to incorporate the pepper into cooked food later on. Blanch the cleaned pepper halves (without stems or seeds) for three minutes, two minutes if you prefer strips or rings, and package with ½ inch headspace before sealing and freezing.

Peppers can also be canned, but you must use a pressure canner. The Clemson Cooperative Extension recommends these procedures for canning red or green peppers, jalapeños, chilies and pimientos:

**Procedure:** Select your favorite pepper(s). CAUTION: If you choose hot peppers, wear plastic gloves while handling them or wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching your face. Small peppers may be left whole. Large peppers may be quartered. Remove cores and seeds. Slash two or four slits in each pepper and either blanch in boiling water or blister using one of the following methods:

**Oven or Broiler Method:** Place peppers in a hot oven (400°F) or broiler for 6 to 8 minutes until skins blister.



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### Got a Food Preservation Question?

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## Pepper Planning *(Continued from page 1)*

**Range-Top Method:** Cover hot burner, either gas or electric, with heavy wire mesh. Place peppers on burner for several minutes until skins blister.

Allow the blistered peppers to cool. Place in a pan and cover with a damp cloth. This will make peeling the peppers easier. After several minutes, peel each pepper.

Now you're ready to use your pressure canner.

- Flatten whole peppers.
- Add ½ teaspoon of salt to each pint jar, if desired.
- Fill jars loosely with peppers and add fresh boiled water, leaving 1-inch headspace.
- Wipe jar rims.
- Adjust lids and process pints in a weighted gauge canner at 10 pounds pressure or in a dial gauge canner at 11 pounds pressure for 35 minutes.

Adjust the processing time for your altitude.



Altitude	0-1000 ft	1000-2000 ft	2000-4000 ft	4000-6000 ft	6000-8000 ft
Weight (psi)	10	15	15	15	15
Dial Gage (psi)	11	11	12	13	14

Remember to always choose fresh, ripe vegetables without bruises. Quality in, quality out!

## The Curious Canner

**Question:** Is it more risky to eat a rare hamburger than a rare steak or roast?



**Answer:** It's always more risky to eat undercooked ground meat because any surface bacteria may be spread throughout the meat during the grinding process. According to the USDA ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F, as measured with a food thermometer.

**Question:** Is it safe to water bath can Asian pears?

**Answer:** Yes, however, Asian pears have a pH of about 4.5 to 4.8, so they need to be acidified if they are water bath canned. To acidify Asian pears, add 1 tablespoon of bottled lemon juice per pint jar or 2 tablespoons per quart jar.



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## Using Homemade Cranberry Sauce After Thanksgiving

*Sue Mosbacher, El Dorado County Master Food Preserver*

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Last fall I helped teach the Cranberry, Pumpkin and Turkey class and demonstrated making cranberry sauce. The class was on October 11, so many grocery stores didn't have fresh cranberries in stock yet. My husband and I went to four stores before we found the cranberries, and then I stocked up!

During our travels, he joked that I should just buy a can of cranberry sauce and put it in a jar; no one would ever know. After I made my samples at home, I had him try a bite of the fresh cranberry sauce. Mmmm ... he could tell the difference; it was delicious!

Since I had stocked up on cranberries, I made about 8 jars of fresh cranberry sauce. I mainly eat cranberry sauce at Thanksgiving, so there's a lot left in my cupboard. What to do with it? I found a recipe in the most recent *Biggest Loser* cookbook that is a winner – simple and oh so tasty.

Pre-heat your oven to 350°F. Wash your hands and use a clean surface to pound a boneless chicken breast and flatten it to about 1/2 inch thick. Lightly mist both sides with olive oil spray, season it with salt and pepper, then sear it for a couple minutes on each side in an ovenproof pan until golden brown. Remove the pan from the heat. Put a dollop of cranberry sauce on top and sprinkle some crumbled goat cheese and dried rosemary over the sauce. Bake for about 4-6 minutes. Use a meat thermometer and remove the chicken when the internal temperature reaches 165°F. It's colorful, moist, and scrumptious. Enjoy!



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## Clostridium Perfringens Foodborne Outbreaks Often Large: CDC

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The following blog posting excerpt came from the Barfblog, which is published and edited by Doug Powell, a professor of food safety at Kansas State University. This particular information was included in a post from March 27th, 2012 by Doug Powell, and warns us of food dangers just in time for the upcoming holiday.

Reading this may remind you to **use a food thermometer when cooking meats**, and to remember to discourage foodborne pathogens from multiplying by limiting the amount of time food stays in the "danger zone"...that is, in temperatures between 40°F and 140°F. Here is a portion of [Doug Powell's post](#):

*Foodborne illness outbreaks resulting from Clostridium perfringens were often large and caused substantial morbidity from 1998 to 2008, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Julian Grass, MPH, a surveillance epidemiologist at the CDC Enteric Diseases Epidemiology Branch, and colleagues presented the findings in Atlanta at the International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases 2012.*

*"Our finding that meats are by far the most common vehicle of C. perfringens outbreaks speaks to the need for proper cooking, cooling, and hot holding of these foods," Grass told Medscape Medical News.*

*"We thought it was particularly interesting that outbreaks peak during the holiday season, when people tend to gather in large groups to eat foods such as roasts, gravies, and poultry that are cooked in large batches or prepared ahead of serving," he added.*

*According to the researchers, C perfringens is estimated to be the third most common cause of foodborne illness in the United States, causing 1 million illnesses each year.*

## CDC's Fruit of the Month: Asian Pear

Once again, the CDC brings us some interesting facts and a great recipe from the *Fruits and Veggies- More Matters* website. This month's fruit, the Asian Pear, can be stored for a long time in the refrigerator, and the recipe sounds scrumptious. Here is an excerpt from the CDC website:

Asian pears are cousins to the pears that are typically seen in grocery stores, but this fruit is similar to an apple and its many names reflect that characteristic. Other names that this fruit goes by are: Chinese pear, Japanese pear, Sand, Nashi, and apple pear.



Asian pears differ from the traditional European ones. These pears are usually round, firm to touch when ripe, and are ready to eat after harvest. Asian pears reach prime quality when they ripen on the tree, like an apple and peach. These pears will be crisp, juicy, and slightly sweet with some tartness, especially near the core. While European pears have the bulbous bottoms and tapering tops, they are not ready to eat until they are slightly soft and must be picked during the green stage and ripen at room temperature. European pears will be soft and juicy, with a sweeter, mellower taste. European pears will be brown at the core and an unpleasant taste if they are tree-ripened.

There are several Asian pear varieties available. Japanese pears are more round in shape, while the Chinese pears are more oval or pyriform (pear-shaped). In the United States, the Japanese type of Asian pear called 20th Century or Nijisseki is the most popular. It is easily identified with its round shape and smooth yellow skin. Other common varieties include the Japanese bronze-toned Hosui pear and the pear-shaped Ya Li, a pale-green Chinese variety.

**Selection:** Select the most fragrant and unbruised fruit with little to no brown spots. Ripe Asian pears are hard and do not soften. They are ready to eat when purchased.

**Storage:** Asian pears are known for keeping well. Store pears a week at room temperature or up to three months in the refrigerator.

### Recipe: Asian Pear Slaw with Chilies

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables

Source: *Chris Faulkner for Melissa's Variety Produce, Inc.*

#### Ingredients

6 celery ribs

4 Tbsp fresh lime juice

4 Tbsp seasoned rice vinegar

1 tsp ginger root

6 Asian Pears, sliced 1/4-inch thick

3 scallions, thinly sliced on diagonal

1/4 cup Cilantro leaves

1/2 tsp Fresno chili or Jalapeno chili, finely chopped



Whisk together juice, vinegar, and ginger and stir in celery and remaining ingredients with salt and pepper to taste. Let stand at room temperature 15 minutes before serving.

## Getting Ready for Canning Season

Before you know it, corner strawberry stands will start popping up and you'll pull out your canning supplies, anticipating jars of tasty jam.

### Jars

Did you store your jars right side up over the winter without a cover? If so, you may be surprised at your collection of little dead spiders. Rinse them out, run them through the dishwasher, and store them upside next time to keep the critters out.

Run your finger around the rim of the jars to check for chips that may prevent a good seal. Don't use a jar if the rim isn't perfectly smooth.



### Jar Rings

- Pull out your jar rings and check for rust on the inside. You'd be surprised how many rings go bad over the winter. What causes that to happen? The answer may be as simple as how they were stored.
- If you didn't wash the rings before you put them away, thinking that they just had water on them and weren't dirty, they could rust from contamination. During processing in either a water bath or pressure canner, some contents in the jar may escape before the jar seals and land on the ring.
- If you store your jar rings in a plastic bag and seal it, moisture can collect in the bag and cause the rings to rust.
- If you store your jar rings in a box with the edges down, moisture can collect under the ring and cause rust. Store the rings upside down, so that moisture isn't trapped beneath the rings.
- If you store your rings on upright jars, moisture can collect under the ring. Turn the jar upside down with the lids on so that they are upside down, again, letting moisture to escape.



### Lids

Lids should be purchased each year to ensure a good seal. When you make a batch of canned food, you should prepare a couple of extra jars and lids. When you follow the package directions and soak your lids in hot water before putting them on your jars, you soften the rubber gasket so that it can adhere to the jar during processing. If you don't use all of the lids, don't throw them out, but don't just put them back in the box. You'll want to make sure you use these lids during your next batch. Either make a mark on the lid with a marker, or put them in a separate container to identify them as "use next" lids. Otherwise, you may end up softening the same rubber gasket again and again, which may weaken the gasket and cause a seal to fail.



### Pectin

Do you have extra pectin from last year? Pectins are complex chemicals whose jelling ability is gradually lost if stored too long. Using old pectins may result in poor jells. Check the expiration date and toss any old product.

Taking a few minutes now to check your supplies can help ensure that your home preserved foods seal properly. You don't want to spend time processing food in jars that don't seal!

## Master Gardener Classes & Events: April and May

Join our fellow educators at a free Master Gardener class. Unless otherwise noted, all El Dorado classes are at the Veterans Memorial Building in Placerville and all Amador classes are at the GS Building in Jackson. For full class descriptions and directions, visit [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master Gardeners](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Gardeners).



### El Dorado County

#### **April**

- 14:** Irrigation
- 21:** Trees & Shrubs
- 28:** Master Gardener Plant Sale

#### **May**

- 12:** Container Gardening
- 19:** Herbs & Lavender, Too!

### Amador County

#### **February**

- 14:** Color in the Garden
- 21:** Master Gardener Plant Sale

#### **May**

- 12:** Herbs and Shakespeare Gardens
- 19:** Master Gardener Tomato Sale

### **Master Food Preserver Winter Services:**

During the winter, Master Food Preservers provide the following services for our community:

- Food preservation hotline
- Free pressure canner testing
- Speakers for custom training for your organization
- Weekly articles in the Mt. Democrat newspaper

To get information throughout the year, visit our website at: [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master Food Preservers/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/).

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*Know someone who would like to receive our newsletters and notifications on classes and events?*

Sign up at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews>.

### **2012 MFP Classes!**

Mark your calendars for July 7 when we kick off our free public classes for 2012!

We're repeating several very popular classes from last year: Basic Cheese Making, Meat Preserving—Deli Meats, and Low Sugar. Of course we still offer a wide variety of core classes to help you preserve the bounty from your garden, or your local farmers' market!

Know what is in your food, safely preserve it for your family, and enjoy the garden all year.

Download the full schedule from our website at [http://ucanr.org/edmfpc\\_classes](http://ucanr.org/edmfpc_classes).



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