



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **CANNING PRESERVES - FOOD AND TRADITIONS**

During the summer and fall, we enjoy ripe, tasty fruits and vegetables fresh from the garden or local produce stand or Farmer's Market. The tastes of summer can easily be extended into the frigid winter months with canning. Home canning allows you to keep a variety of freshly preserved foods available year round. During the cooler months of autumn, I often get calls about canning jams and jewel-toned jellies for holiday gifts. Persimmons and pomegranates are two of the fall favorites.

In the past, home canning was an important method of food preservation. Now, many wonder why people would go to the trouble of canning when most produce is easily available at grocery stores. Canning offers benefits ranging from avoiding preservatives to meeting specific dietary needs to providing a sense of personal satisfaction. Canning is an economical method of preserving food that enables people to retain more control over what they eat. "Most of the cost of food goes toward the cost of labor in the food system. So, in general, the more labor you do yourself, the more money you save." Canning can also be a family activity involving several generations, preserving both the foods themselves and the knowledge and skills involved in preparing them. Many people can foods because they prefer the way the home-produced food tastes. Canning also frees up space in the refrigerator and freezer.

The most popular items to be canned are jams and jellies, vegetables, pickles, fruits, and tomato sauces. Jams and jellies are most common for beginners and veterans. Salsa is one of the latest trends in canning. Tested recipes are critical to success and food safety for the consumer of the product.

There are two methods of canning. The boiling water method is used for acidic foods—jams, jellies, fruits, pickles, tomatoes with added acid and acidified salsas for example. The temperature reached by the boiling water method is sufficient to destroy the molds, yeasts, and bacteria that can be found in acidic foods. Low acid foods—meats and other vegetables and combination food products-- however, require a higher temperature than boiling water to destroy the bacterial spores and toxins that can thrive in a low acid environment. A pressure canner provides a sufficiently high temperature to safely preserve these low acid foods.

The most important thing to remember when canning is to follow directions. The "USDA Home Guide to Canning" includes research-tested recipes.

It is also critical to remember that:

- If the jar does not seal, the three options are to re-can the food, freeze it, or eat it.
- Although canned food should remain safe to eat indefinitely, the quality of the food is best if consumed within one year. The best way to store canned foods is to keep canned food in a cool, dry, dark place at a temperature between 50-70 degrees Fahrenheit.

Whether you have been canning for years or are just beginning, canning can be a rewarding process that allows you to preserve your favorite foods to enjoy year round.

For additional information, contact the University of California Cooperative Extension Service in San Joaquin County at (209) 468-2085.

**Source:** Victoria Getty and Writer Betsy Wesner, Purdue University, Department of Food and Nutrition, West Lafayette, Indiana.

