Preparedness Hints

Why Can?

USDA Publishes Guides for Canning

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) publishes a guide for home canning. I found it on the Internet and am going to reproduce portions of it over the next few weeks. If you would like to order the entire guide, it is publication number: SF06 and the price is $20.00. Call 352-392-1764, to request information and place orders. For Master Card and Visa orders, call 1-300-226-1764.

Why Can?

Canning can be a safe and economical way to preserve quality food at home. Disregarding the value of your labor, canning home grown food may save you half the cost of buying commercially canned food.Canning favorite and special products to be enjoyed by family and friends is a fulfilling experience and a source of pride for many people.

Many vegetables begin losing some of their vitamins when harvested. Nearly half the vitamins may be lost within a few days unless the fresh produce is cooled or preserved. Within 1 to 2 weeks, even refrigerated produce lose half or more of some of its vitamins. The heating process during canning destroys from one-third to one-half of vitamins A and C, thiamin and riboflavin. Once canned additional losses of these sensitive vitamins are from 5 to 20 percent each year. The amounts of other vitamins, however, are only slightly lower in canned compared with fresh food. If vegetables are handled property and canned promptly after harvest they can be more nutritious than fresh produce sold in local stores.

How Canning Preserves Foods

The advantages of home canning are lost when you start with poor quality fresh foods; when jars fail to seal properly, when food spoils; and when flavors, texture, color and nutrients deteriorate using prolonged storage.

The high percentage of water in most fresh foods makes them very perishable. They spoil or lose their quality for several reasons: growth of undesirable microorganisms- bacteria, molds, and yeasts, activity of food enzymes, reactions with oxygen and moisture loss.

Microorganisms live and multiply quickly on the surfaces of fresh food and on the inside of bruised, insect-damaged, and diseased food. Oxygen and enzymes are present throughout fresh food tissues. Proper canning practices include: carefully selecting and washing fresh food, peeling some fresh foods, hot packing many foods, adding acids (lemon juice or vinegar) to some foods, using acceptable jars and self-sealing lids, processing jars in a boiling-water or pressure canner for the correct period of time.

Collectively, these practices remove oxygen; destroy enzymes; prevent the growth of undesirable bacteria, yeasts, and molds: and help form a high vacuum in jars. Good vacuums form tight seals which keep liquid in and air and microorganisms out.