

Lifestyles

Firm fruit is secret to successful preserves

By Alice L. Pettit
Home Extension Agent

A lot of people seem to be busy making preserves now, because our office has received a number of calls this week. It might be helpful to some of you to have information on making preserves.

Fruit preserves are whole fruits or pieces of large fruits cooked in heavy syrup until clear, tender, and transparent.

The fruit should keep its form and plumpness and be somewhat crisp and tender, rather than tough and soft. Fruits for preserves should be tree-ripened and fresh.

Success in making preserves depends in a large measure upon using firm sound fruit. Some of the fruits best adapted for preserving are strawberries, cherries, plums, peaches, crab apples, berries and currants.

Thoroughly wash the fruits, discarding any bruised, mushy or decayed portions.

Large fruits such as pears and peaches should be peeled and cut into uniform pieces.

Usually three-fourths pound of sugar is allowed for each pound of fruit. (If scales are not available, use 3/4 cup sugar to each cup of fruit.)

Sugar helps in gel formation, serves as a preserving agent, and contributes to the flavor of the product. It also has a firming effect on fruit, a property that is useful in the making of preserves.

The manner in which the sugar is added depends upon the texture of the fruit used. Firm fruits such as pears, quinces, melon rind, and crab apple are better if cooked in boiling water until slightly tender.

Make a syrup of the sugar and water in which fruit has boiled. Allow this syrup to partly cool before adding the precooked fruit.

When precooked fruit is added, bring the mixture slowly to a boil.

After the mixture has reached the boiling point, it should be cooked rapidly until the fruit is clear and tender and the syrup thick. When the preserves are finished, remove kettle from heat, skim to remove foam if necessary.

Preserves will have a better consistency if allowed to plump (stand in shallow trays or pans until cool) before packing into jars. If the syrup becomes too thick before the fruit is tender and clear, add boiling water (1/4 cup at a time).

If the fruit is clear and tender and the syrup too thin, the fruit should be removed and the syrup cooked rapidly to the desired consistency to, or almost to, the jellying point.

To cook preserves, follow the recipe selected and then put the preserves in clean, unflawed standard canning jars. They should then be processed in a boiling water bath.

The easiest and best way to seal preserves is with two-piece canning lids. Use only standard home canning jars. For jars with two-piece lids: use new lids; bands may be reserved. Fill hot jars to 1/8 - 1/4 inch of top with mixture. Wipe jar rim clean, place hot metal lid on jar with sealing compound next to glass and screw metal band down firmly. We recommend processing jam and preserves in a boiling water bath, since we are in a warm humid climate where mold growth is a common spoilage problem.

Processing in Boiling Water Bath
A boiling water bath canner may

Front Burner

be purchased or can be made from a large kettle or pail that is deep enough to permit water to cover jars at least one inch over the top and a little extra space for boiling.

The canner must have a rack to hold the jars at least one half inch above bottom of canner.

The rack may be made of wooden strips, wire or other perforated material, but must be put together in a manner that will allow water to circulate.

The canner should have a cover which will make it possible to keep water at a good rolling boil all during processing.

Before the preparation of the food is begun, place the water bath canner on the heat with sufficient water to cover the jars at least one inch over the top. This permits water to be heating while food is being prepared.

Water should be boiling when jars of food are placed into it. Prepare and pack food and tighten cap according to directions.

Prepare only enough jars of food at one time to fill the canner.

Work rapidly so as little time as possible will elapse between precooking or packing the food and getting it into the canner.

Place the jars of food on the rack in the canner far enough apart to allow the free circulation of water around them. Boiling water should be 1 or more inches above top of jars. If water does not cover jars at least one inch over the top, add boiling water to this height.

Start counting processing time as soon as the water in canner again reaches a good rolling boil. Keep the water boiling all during the processing period.

If water boils down add sufficient BOILING water to keep it at the required heights. Process the

(Continued on page 7)



Whopper

Lucy Stevens of Rockfish needs both hands to hold this two and one-half pound tomato she gathered recently from her garden. Steven says she has had good luck this year with her plants, which have reached over seven feet. "I've kept them watered," she said. The tomato is an Early Delicious.

Bees doing job for North Carolina

By Willie Featherstone, Jr.
County Extension Chairman

Anybody can keep bees. In North Carolina, farmers, businessmen, housewives, carpenters, children, doctors, university professors and just about anyone else you can imagine keeps bees.

Where can bees be kept?

Bees can be kept almost anywhere. There are beekeepers in deserts, in small towns, in farming areas, in large cities and on beachfront property. There is even a beekeeper in New York City who keeps several hives on the roof of his penthouse apartment.

What is a bee colony?

A bee colony is merely a large family of bees. It contains one queen, who is the mother of all the other bees in the hive, between 20,000-50,000 workers, and several hundred drones.

How popular is beekeeping in North Carolina?

Beekeeping is a very popular hobby and interest seems to increase each day. There are at least

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10,000 beekeepers in the state and 1,500 of those beekeepers belong to the N.C. State Beekeepers Association.

Is North Carolina an important beekeeping state?

Yes, very definitely. North Carolina has approximately 200,000 hives of honey bees, the third largest number in the United States. There are more hobby beekeepers in North Carolina than any other state in the country. Why is beekeeping important in North Carolina?

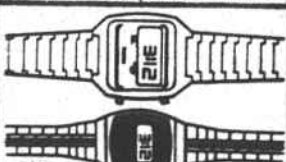
In 1978 the state's beekeepers with the help of their bees, produced over six million pounds of honey with a value of \$5,466,000, plus 122,000 pounds of beeswax with a value of \$187,000. But, that is only part of the story. Honey bees also contribute another 30 million dollars to the state's economy through the pollination of such crops as apples, blueberries and cucumbers.

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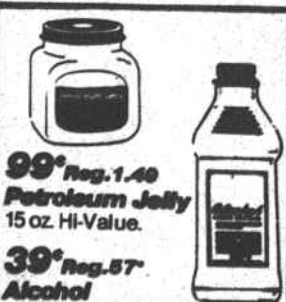
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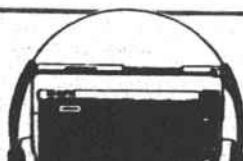


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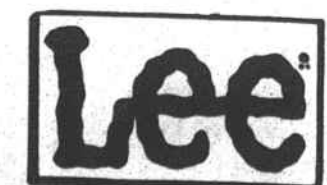
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