

Use Safe Methods For Your Canning

Your home canned foods can provide your family with months of delicious, nutritious, and economical meals this year. They can also give them food poisoning.

Most cases of botulism in home canned foods occur when the open kettle or oven canning methods are used or when people resort to chemicals and preserving powders, says Dr. Nadine Tope, extension food and nutrition specialist at North Carolina State University.

"Heat resistant bacteria aren't always present in the foods used in canning," explains Dr. Tope, "But if this bacteria does happen to be around, the food will probably spoil unless you use safe canning methods."

The open kettle or pot-to-the-jar method of canning has one major drawback, according to Dr. Tope: it seldom sterilizes food. It is also possible for food to become contaminated with spoilage organisms on the way from the pot to the jar.

If that happens, says the specialist, foods will spoil, even if you get a good seal.

Oven canning should never be used, because there is no accurate way to know or control the temperature. The temperature of the oven can vary according to the oven regulator and the circulation of heat. And, jars may explode, damaging the oven and cutting or burning people.

"There are no shortcuts to safe, home canned foods," the specialist notes. And the best bet is to follow reliable canning recommendations. Your county Extension office can provide further information, if necessary.

Plan Ahead To Use Seasoned Firewood

The severe winter may have melted away your pile of seasoned firewood more quickly than you had planned, forcing the use of recently cut green wood.

You can learn from experience and lay in a larger supply of wood for next winter. While unseasoned wood will burn, it makes a better fuel if allowed to cure for several months.

N. C. Agricultural Extension forest resources specialists suggest seasoning firewood for a minimum of six to nine months. The seasoned dry wood has more heat value and will not deposit excessive creosote in chimneys and stovepipes.

The North Carolina State University extension specialists point out that any moisture in wood reduces the available heat, because some heat is lost in the process of changing water to steam which escapes and allows the wood to burn.

Here's a tip from the tree specialists that may help you speed up the drying process: When you cut a tree during the growing season, allow the limbs and leaves to stay on the tree for at least a week. The leaves will draw moisture from the wood and it will dry more quickly.

Seasoning can be speeded up by stacking firewood in a single tier in a sunny location. Both ends of the pieces should be exposed. The idea is to expose as much of the surface of the wood as possible for maximum air circulation.

You can speed the drying even more by covering the stack with plastic. On sunny days temperatures under the plastic will rise much higher than the outside temperature. This will warm the wood and evaporate the moisture.

Some water vapor will condense on the plastic, so ventilation is desirable. The plastic should be held off the ends of the firewood to allow air to flow and to keep condensation from wetting the wood.

Seasoning time for different species varies under different atmospheric conditions. Hot, dry, windy days will take more moisture out of the wood than cool, moist days.

If the end of the logs are showing a few cracks, the wood is probably will seasoned.

Ninety percent of new products placed on the market for sale fail within four years of introduction.

Use your ice cream scoop to put muffin batter in muffin tin cups. It's easier and keeps muffins uniform in size.

A Peachy Way To End A Southern Evening



Peachy Pecan Shortcake

Pecan Shortcake (below)
1 cup chilled whipping cream
¼ cup powdered sugar
3 or 4 fresh peaches, sliced, or 2 packages (10 oz. each) frozen peach slices, thawed and drained
Pecan halves

Bake shortcakes. Beat whipping cream and powdered sugar in chilled bowl until stiff. Split warm shortcakes; spoon peaches between halves and over tops. Top with whipped cream and garnish with pecan halves. 6 servings.

Pecan Shortcakes

2-1/3 cps Bisquick baking mix
½ cup chopped pecans
3 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons margarine or butter, melted
½ cup milk

Heat oven to 425°. Mix all ingredients until soft dough forms. Gently smooth dough into ball on lightly floured cloth-covered board. Knead 8 to 10 times. Roll dough ½ inch thick. Cut with floured 3-inch cutter. Bake on ungreased cookie sheet until golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes.

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