

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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## Home Canning – Safely

The economy is still down, but temperatures are slowly going up. People are thinking about putting in home gardens to try to save some money. Are you? Some are planning enough garden space for extra to can for later use too. Many of these are folks who lost a lot when freezers lost power after storms in the last couple of years. They don't want to risk losing all their food again to another power outage. Canned food can sit on the shelf, and even be eaten straight from the jar if necessary, no power needed to thaw or heat. Some people want to can their own food so that they can make it sodium-free, or additive-free, or just so that they know everything that's in it, instead of having to read the fine print on labels and still not understand all the big words. For these, or many other reasons, there are a lot of people wanting to learn how to can their own food, the way Grandmother used to do.

With the new interest in this old skill, there are plenty of new sources of advice too. Books on the shelf, programs on TV, people offering classes. The classes at the Cooperative Extension office in Seffner have been filling up months ahead of time, but more are coming! You can check the website <http://hillsboroughnutrition.ifas.ufl.edu> for upcoming classes and registration information.

If you are thinking of trying home canning you need to know some basics before you decide what sources to use for your information. One very important thing to understand is why some food must, no questions asked, be canned in a pressure canner. The reason is botulism. Botulism is food poisoning, but it's not like others.

People don't usually get diarrhea or vomiting, nausea or cramps. Botulism is a nerve toxin. It paralyzes us from the top down. First the eyebrows, then eyes, mouth, and on down. If a victim doesn't get antitoxin before it reaches the heart or lungs, it can be fatal. It is not something to be taken lightly!

Another thing to know about botulism is that the bacteria that cause it do not like acid or air. They only grow where there is no oxygen, like inside a sealed jar. When we seal food in a jar we must be sure we have either killed the bacteria or that there is enough acid to keep them from growing. They won't make the food look, taste or smell bad when they grow, we can't tell that they're there. But their toxin could kill us.

So, any food that doesn't have enough acid must be canned in a pressure canner. At 10 pounds of pressure the temperature inside is 240° F. That is hot enough to kill the bacteria, without turning the food into mush. Foods that have enough acid to stop the botulism bacteria can be safely canned in boiling water. We just need to kill the molds and bacteria that would spoil food, make it look or taste bad.

So which foods have enough acid? Most fruit naturally has enough acid to be safely canned in boiling water. Tomatoes and figs don't, so we need to add lemon juice to them. Products made from fruits – jelly, jam, marmalades and things like that, have enough acid too. And foods that we add acid to - pickles and relishes, or that make their own acid like sauerkraut, are safe in boiling water. Everything else, all the vegetables, plus meat, poultry and seafood, must be canned in a pressure canner.

Be sure to use tested instructions for canning. Use directions from the USDA or a University Extension Service. Do not try to invent your own! For pressure canning be sure to use a canner that holds at least 12 quarts of water. Small pressure cookers, the

4 or 6 quart sizes, get hot and cool down so fast that they don't kill all the bacteria.

These can not be used safely for pressure canning. The Extension office in Seffner has safe canning instructions. Give me a call if you need them.

Whether you have home canned corn, frozen corn or grab a can from the store, here's a wonderful soup to warm the family one of these chilly days. Add some carrots for extra color too. Don't let the milk boil or it will curdle.

### Canned Corn Chowder

3 Tbsp vegetable oil	1 C cooked diced ham
½ C chopped onion	½ C chopped celery
½ C chopped green or red bell pepper	1 15-oz can low sodium chicken broth
1 C diced potato	1 14-oz can evaporated low fat milk
2 C (16-oz can) whole kernel corn	1 2-oz jar diced pimentos

Salt, pepper, paprika to taste

Heat oil in saucepan. Sauté ham 5 minutes, remove from pan and reserve. Sauté onion, celery and pepper until tender. Add chicken broth, potatoes, salt and pepper.

Cover and simmer about 20 minutes until potatoes are tender. Add reserved ham, corn, milk and pimientos. Reduce heat and heat until hot, but do not boil. Adjust salt and pepper if desired. If too thick add a little hot water. Serve, and garnish with paprika.

Serves 6.