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Fighting Contamination in Tomatoes



After cutting tomatoes, refrigerate them to keep them safe.

A fresh tomato is more than just a tasty addition to a sandwich or salad.



To scientists at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the tomato is an enigma and the focus of a group of researchers nicknamed "Team Tomato."

The mystery of the tomato has to do with its vulnerability to contamination by *Salmonella*, a bacterium that is a common cause of foodborne illness.

New research conducted at Virginia Tech's Agriculture and Research Extension Center has found an enemy of *Salmonella*. This bacterium called *Paenibacillus*, is not harmful to humans, but it kills *Salmonella*. This finding could be very beneficial in fighting *Salmonella* in the mid-Atlantic region.

Other research has shown that water quality is a key factor in tomato safety. Contamination can occur at various times during the growing season. This emphasizes the importance of using clean water.

Read more about ongoing tomato research at <http://1.usa.gov/12RBDIQ>.

Foodborne Disease Outbreaks, 1998-2008

Between 1998-2008, 13,405 foodborne disease outbreaks were reported. This resulted in 273,120 illnesses, 9,109 hospitalizations, and 200 deaths.

Norovirus emerged as the

primary cause of illness from leafy vegetables.

The locations most commonly sited were a single restaurant or deli followed by a home kitchen.

Poultry, fish and beef

were the top three commodities involved in the outbreaks.

Read more about these findings at <http://1.usa.gov/122U1rU>.



Headspace in Canning Jars

If you have older editions of the Ball Blue Book, the pickling recipes all say to use 1/4-inch headspace. This has been updated in the copyright 2011 edition to 1/2-inch headspace to coincide with the USDA recommendations of 1/2-inch headspace.

Lauren Devine-Hager at Jarden Home Brands states:

"When we originally created the Complete Book of Home Preserving, we followed USDA guidelines for headspace. Thus, we used the 1/2-inch headspace for pickles. A year or two later, when we were up for a new print-

ing of the Ball Blue Book, we converted the pickle recipes over from the 1/4-inch headspace to the 1/2-inch headspace to ensure consistency. So, the current Ball Blue Book states 1/2-inch headspace. As a side note, our pickle mix recipes also use a 1/2-inch headspace."



Refer to recipes for proper headspace amount.

▼
The mission of the Home Baking Association is to "promote home baking by providing tools and knowledge to perpetuate generations of home bakers."

New Resources from Home Baking Association

Looking for teaching resources for baking with kids? The Home Baking Association can help.

Bakeworks is a new program for preschool aged children. Besides learn-

ing to bake, it teaches community service through baking. It also teaches math, language, literacy, arts, cooperative learning, social and emotional skills, science and kitchen safety.

Learn more about this program and other educator resources at www.homebaking.org/foreducators/index.html.

Soften Butter for Best Creaming Results

Recipes for baked goods will often say to soften butter prior to creaming it with sugar. The ideal temperature for softened butter is 67 degrees F or when the butter gives slightly when pressed.

This allows the grains of sugar to push into the fat creating air bubbles and a fluffy appearance after creaming. During baking this added air helps give a lighter texture and weight to a baked good.

The creaming procedure with softened butter typically takes around three minutes. If cold butter is used, it can take about 15 minutes for the same result.



As air is beat into the mixture, the color will become light yellow.

Keeping Homemade Pesto Bright Green



Behind growing tomatoes, fresh herbs are the second most popular food gardeners enjoy growing. Basil is a favorite herb and is used in many recipes. Homemade pesto is also a treat, until it turns an ugly drab green.

To help maintain a bright green color, there are two options.

- Blanch basil for 30 seconds in boiling water. Immediately plunge the hot basil in ice water to stop the cooking. The blanching process inactivates enzymes in the basil that cause the color change.
- Add 4 teaspoons lemon juice to 2 cups of packed basil. The lemon juice contains antioxidants to prevent oxidation of the green color. The juice will also add a slight acidity to the pesto.



Source: Cook's Illustrated, May 2013

Purses Carry More Than You Think!

Ladies, here's something to think about. Handles on one in five purses are covered with bacteria. Surprised? If you think about how many times you carry your purse, it makes sense.

The inside of purses can be even worse where it may be dark, closed and moist. Then think about the bottoms! Yikes! The good news is most of the bacteria is harmless.

To reduce the bacteria, open and let the purse air out. Don't store food inside the purse. Then wipe it down with disinfecting wipes frequently.

Clean out your purse and get rid of stuff that bacteria can feed on and grow. An added bonus is you may find some hidden treasures!

Source: <http://bit.ly/13hJ1a1>

Tube Pan Key to Foam Cake Success



Foam cakes should have the height of the pan.

Foam cakes come in three basic forms. They include angel food cakes, sponge cakes, and chiffon cakes. These cakes are baked in a tube pan for best results.

Foam cakes have very little flour which, in turn leaves very little gluten development for a strong cake structure. The tube pan gives the batter something to cling to as it rises during baking. Also, because of the limited gluten structure, the cake will fall after baking unless it is turned upside down to maintain the volume.

Foam cakes baked in regular cake pans or jelly roll pans will fall and result in a flat cake. Foam cake batters do not bake well as cupcakes either.

Source: Cook's Illustrated, July 2013

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On the Web at
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Dishwasher Tips



Follow manufacturer instructions for loading a dishwasher

Automatic dishwashers can help save time and make cleanup simple. Benefits are obtained when the machine is used properly and when appropriate detergents are used.



The American Cleaning Institute® offers these tips:

- Store detergent out of children's reach.
- Keep dishwasher detergent in the original container for best storage.
- Load the dishwasher correctly for best cleaning.
- Use the proper amount of detergent.
- Run dishwasher when it is full.
- Save energy by running the dishwasher during off-peak hours.

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/14IZN5c>.

Spice Up Your Cabinet!

Want to add flavor but don't know which spices to keep on hand? Here's a list of suggested spices from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.



- Salt
- Ground black pepper
- Clove
- Oregano
- Cumin
- Cinnamon
- Onion powder
- Bay leaf
- Curry powder
- Thyme
- Paprika
- Nutmeg
- Turmeric
- Cayenne pepper
- Garlic powder
- Chili powder
- Italian herb blend