As gardens are getting planted, so are plans to preserve the harvest to enjoy in later months. To safely preserve food, education is key to know the best method and recommendations. The North Central Food Safety Extension Network is working to provide educational resources for a unified message. Here are some resources for your use.

**Jar It Right!** - Best practices for canning with Mason-type jars. Be sure jars are clean and free of nicks or cracks. Wash jars before use. Warm jars before filling with prepared food. Sterilizing jars is not required for processing times longer than 10 minutes.

**Put a Lid On It!** - Best practices for ensuring a safe seal on canning jars. Wash lids prior to use, do not heat or boil lids as they may not seal properly. Clean the jar rim before applying the lid to reduce seal failures.

**Pressure Can It Right!** - Tips to safely use a stovetop or electric pressure canner. Pressure canners must be used for canning plain vegetables or any meat product to destroy *Clostridium botulinum* spores.

**Steam Can It Right!** - Guidelines on using a steam canner for preserving high acid foods. This method can be used for any water bath canned food with a total processing time of 45 minutes.


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**2023 National Festival of Breads**

The finalists have been chosen! The 2023 National Festival of Breads will be a virtual event on June 1, 2023 to announce the next top bread baker.

You can help select the winner by voting for the People’s Choice Award on the [National Festival of Breads Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/NFBOFB) by May 26, 2023.


There are also 23 Honorable Mention awards from the preliminary judging in four categories of Say Cheese, Wholesome and Healthy, Quick and Easy, and Go Nuts!
Peeling Produce Before Preserving

When preserving food, there are certain steps to take to be sure the food is safe after preserving. One of those steps is peeling produce. Why? Bottom line is food safety.

While the outside peels of many types of produce are nutritionally beneficial, those peels can hold onto microorganisms and dirt. Rinsing produce with water before peeling is the first step to remove microorganisms and dirt. Peeling physically removes that outer layer and drastically reduces contamination. After a final rinse with water, the food is ready to preserve.

Therefore, when a recipe says to peel the produce, it must be done. That recipe was developed and researched with that step included. Choosing to skip the peeling step can result in improperly processed food and spoilage.

Don’t let those peels go to waste! Save them to make a vegetable stock to freeze and use in soups and other recipes. Add them to your garden compost pile or feed your animals.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation

Easy Peeling

While a vegetable peeler or paring knife is useful to peel produce, for some foods there is an easier method.

For tomatoes, blanching them in hot water works well and less flesh is lost. Heat a large stockpot of water to boiling. Core tomatoes or poke the skin with a knife and place in the hot water for about 60 seconds or until the peel starts to pull away from the flesh. Remove them from the hot water and plunge them into an ice water bath to stop the cooking process. Gently rub the peel and it should slip off easily.

This method works well for fruits with thin skins such as peaches and nectarines.

Produce Storage Tips

The recently updated Kansas Garden Guide is an excellent resource for growing many kinds of produce in Kansas. But it is also a great resource for guidance on harvesting and storing your bountiful harvest.

In Chapter 13 of the Kansas Garden Guide, it guides you through the indicators of when to harvest produce including size, color and optimal harvest method. Preventing foodborne illness is key at this point due to presence of wildlife, personal hygiene or cross-contamination from dirty equipment. Some types of produce are best stored in the refrigerator, some can be at room temperature. Storage conditions of humidity and temperature also affect length of storage time.
Celebrate Juneteenth with Red Foods!

The color red is important for Juneteenth as it signifies resilience and respect to West African ancestors. So add some red foods to your menu as you plan your celebration!

- Strawberries and raspberries—add to lemonade, use in fresh salads, or a tasty pie.
- Red cabbage—Add the crunchy color to any cabbage slaw or leafy green salad with a red wine vinaigrette.
- Beets—Pickled beets are a tasty side dish with a little zing!
- Red beans—Add to a three-bean salad or use in red beans and rice.

A Caution about Fats and Oils in Canning

While fat or oil can enhance flavor and texture in many recipes, when it comes to canning, fat and oil can lead to food safety problems. There are very few recommendations to use fat or oil in home food preservation.

Research shows that fats and oils can surround bacterial spores, if present, and protect them from heat destruction. This allows them to survive in the jar of food.

In canning meat it is best to use the leanest meat possible. Fat can boil up during canning and interfere with the sealing compound of the lid. Use the proper amount of headspace for best results.

Do not add oil to home canned tomato sauces, salsa or marinated vegetables. Making flavored oils that contain herbs, garlic, peppers, etc. can provide favorable conditions for *Clostridium botulinum* to survive when stored at room temperature. Store these in the refrigerator.

Besides canning meat, poultry and fish, there are very few researched canning recipes that use oil. Learn more at [www.rrc.ks-state.edu/preservation/index.html](http://www.rrc.ks-state.edu/preservation/index.html).


Temporary Food Stand Guidelines

Fair season is almost here! Here are some reminders from the Kansas Department of Agriculture for serving food safely in licensed food stands.

- **Food prepared in private homes may not be used or offered.**

- **All equipment needed for the intended operation must be on hand.**

- **Food contact surfaces must be protected from contamination by consumers.**

- **There must be separate areas for taking money and preparing food.**

- **Dishwashing must include washing, rinsing and sanitizing equipment.**

- **A handwashing facility must be available with hot/warm water, soap, and paper towels.**

- **Only one raw, potentially hazardous food that requires on-site preparation or cooking can be made or served.**

For 4-H food stands, see [https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3472.pdf](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3472.pdf)

For more information, go to [www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/topics/4h.html](http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/topics/4h.html).