CANNING - IT’S NOT JUST FOR YOUR GRANDMA

The article for this week is contributed by my colleague,
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As the planting season is soon upon us, many locals are determining which fruits, vegetables and herbs to include in their container and backyard gardens. Often we select and plant certain items in our gardens dependent upon our ability to consume our produce without producing excess. Canning allows gardeners to preserve the additional harvested items for consumption year round. This is an exciting time for gardeners and the perfect time for readers to learn proper methods to preserve fresh produce from our local gardens.

Often thought of as a lost art, or a talent only your grandma may have found essential, canning is an important, relevant and safe method of food preservation if practiced properly. Food preservation through canning is a safe and healthy method to store food for your family. As the 4-H Educator for Frederick County, I teach youth as young as eight, the art of food preservation because I believe anyone can learn canning practices. Sharing the experience of taking fresh produce and storing it for the coming year with your friends and family is a great experience full of hands on excitement, great conversation, and memorable family time.

Although canning is not a hard practice to learn, there are specific steps for one to follow in mastering the science of safe food preservation. When using proper canning practices one should always:

- Carefully select and wash fresh food
- Peel certain fresh foods
- Utilize hot packing for many foods
- Add acids (lemon juice or vinegar) to certain foods
- Use acceptable jars and self-sealing lids
- Process jars in a boiling-water or pressure canner for the correct period of time.

“Collectively, these practices remove oxygen; destroy enzymes; prevent the growth of undesirable bacteria, yeasts, and molds; and help form a high vacuum in jars. Good vacuums form tight seals which keep liquid in and air and microorganisms out” according to the National Center for Home Food Preservation (http://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html).

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If learning safe food preservation techniques is an interest of yours, you can attend classes locally in Frederick through the University of Maryland Extension office on Montevue Lane. Our spring class will be offered on May 26, 2015, from 9:00 – 3:00 p.m. Pre-registration is required and the class fee is $65. Participants will receive a copy of the Fifth edition So Easy to Preserve cookbook by Cooperative Extension The University of Georgia and will receive hands on instruction. For registration and more information please contact the UME- Frederick Office at 301-600-1589 or via email at schiazi@umd.edu.

When canning always use a certified tested recipe. This will ensure consistency and most important a safe product for your family or friends. One of my favorite recipes is Strawberry-Kiwi Jam, from the So Easy to Preserve Fifth Edition cookbook published by The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

**STRAWBERRY – KIWI JAM**

3 cups crushed strawberries  
3 kiwi, peeled and diced  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1 tablespoon minced crystallized ginger  
1 package powdered pectin  
5 cups sugar

Combine strawberries, kiwi, lemon juice, ginger and pectin in a large saucepot. Bring quickly to a boil, stirring frequently. Add sugar, stirring until dissolved. Return to a rolling boil. Boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim foam if necessary. Ladle hot jam into hot jars, leaving 1/4 inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process 10 minutes in a boiling water bath or enjoy fresh. Makes approximately 6 pint jars.

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