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Can your pressure canner pass the test?

It's just about time to fetch canners out of the basement or garage. Fresh summer produce is on its way. Strawberries are ripening and gardens are being planted, and hopefully that means fresh summer produce can't be far behind.

After last year's boom in home canning, it is still difficult to find some canning supplies, like flat metal



**Kate
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Your OSU
Extension Edge

canning lids. Manufacturers exhausted their reserve stock last year and are trying to keep up with demand. Please be cautious when purchasing products online,

as there have been many items listed looking like canning jars or brand-name canning lids that are not. I am noticing it is easier to find cases of new jars and lids than it is to find boxes of just flat lids. This year may be the time to replace some of your older jars.

I'm always happy to answer your questions (even though I rarely seem to give the answer you really want to hear). It's good to know some of you are taking the time to ask questions and not just going ahead with something that may be unsafe. Home canning is a relatively simple process, but there are so many variables that can affect your finished product and so many books and recipes in circulation with unsafe processes that it is a good idea to make sure you are following the most recent safe home-canning guidelines.

Most people have a

healthy regard for the possible dangers of pressure canners. Usually, this respect is based on an old story of a pressure canner "blowing up" in someone's grandmother's kitchen. Regardless, it is important to realize pressure canners are safe if the safety precautions are followed and the canner is used properly. Dangers arise when the unit isn't maintained and/or is used improperly.

One of the recommendations for home canning foods safely is use a pressure canner to process low-acid foods such as vegetables, meat, poultry and fish. These low-acid foods must be pressure canned at the recommended time and temperature to destroy *Clostridium botulinum*, the bacterium that causes botulism food poisoning. Home canning low-acid foods in boiling water canners is

See CANNER Page 53

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Snyders Pretzel Sticks	16 oz. \$1.50
Deli Pepperoni lb. \$1.99	14 lb. case \$1.50 lb.

CANNER

from Page 52

absolutely unsafe because 212 F is not high enough to destroy botulinum bacteria.

Pressure cookers and canners can be evaluated at several locations this summer at no charge. This service will be available on the following dates by appointment:

—Wednesday, June 16 at Mt. Hope Hardware from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

—Monday, June 21 at Keim Home Center from 3-7 p.m.

—Tuesday, July 20 at Harvest Ridge/Holmes County Fairgrounds from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

—Monday, Aug. 16 at Keim Home Center from 3-7 p.m.

—Wednesday, Aug. 18 at Mt. Hope Hardware from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Go to www.go.osu.edu/2021cannertestingholmes or call 330-674-3015 to register for an appointment time. If you would

like to look for canner testing options outside of Holmes County, go to fcs.osu.edu/programs/healthy-people/food-preservation/pressure-canner-testing for a listing of other counties offering this service. Each appointment is 15 minutes. Please be on time. If you can't make these dates, we can schedule a time to test your pressure canner in our office for a small fee.

Individuals should bring their cooker or canner lids with gauges attached to the testing location during these times. If possible, we ask the person who will do the canning be present during the testing. It only takes a few minutes for the peace of mind knowing your gauge is accurate. In addition to testing gauges, both weighted and dial gauge units will be evaluated on several other safety factors. Fact sheets on food preservation also will be available.

Here are some guidelines from National Presto Industries on important

safeguards and maintenance of your pressure canner. These guidelines apply to most brands and styles of pressure canners/cookers.

—Before use: Check the vent pipe. Hold the lid up to light and look through the vent pipe to be sure it is not clogged. Check the air vent/cover lock to be certain it moves freely. Check handles of the lid and body. If loose, tighten with a screwdriver before using.

—Do not use pressure canner on an outdoor LP gas burner over 12,000 BTUs.

—Do not open canner until internal pressure has been reduced to zero, cover lock has dropped and no steam escapes when the pressure regulator is removed.

—When removing the canner lid, lift the lid toward your body so the steam escapes away from you.

—When normal operating pressure is reached, gradually lower the heat to maintain pressure.

—Supervise the canner closely when in use. It is recommended children not be near when the pressure canner is in use.

—Each time the canner is washed, remove the sealing ring/gasket and wash it in hot soapy water, rinse and allow to air dry. Do not store the sealing ring in the sealing ring groove in the lid. When not using the canner, store the ring loosely in the bottom of the canner.

—When your pressure

canner is not in use, invert the cover on the canner bottom and store in a dry place.

—Replace the over-pressure plug and sealing ring if they become hard, deformed, cracked, pitted or worn. This should be about every three years. Always replace both pieces at the same time. Exposure to cooking oil may cause these parts to deteriorate more rapidly.

—If your canner has a dial gauge, please remem-

ber this is a very sensitive instrument. Do not submerge the gauge in water or let the gauge come in contact with any liquid. If this happens, the inside mechanisms of the gauge may be damaged.

Remember, home food preservation can be safe, simple and easy to learn.

Kate Shumaker is an OSU Extension family and consumer sciences educator and may be called at 330-674-3015.



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