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Canning Without Mother for a Helper

By CARRIE PLUNKETT

"CANNING—such an old, old story!"

Yes, but so is cooking, sewing, cleaning, washing and any form of housework. But just so long as the supply of housekeepers is replenished in large quantities, so long will there be women who have questions about housekeeping subjects.

The bride wants to be economical and to help her husband make his fortune right away, so what can be a better start in that direction than to can her fruits and vegetables, for future war and the peace that will follow? It will be a very good idea.

Of course she helped mother with the home canning and so long as she could ask questions when in doubt she got along beautifully. But, oh, there are so many things she is not just sure about now that she is dependent upon herself, and has no private telephone connections with her mother.

What kind of questions does she ask? They are many.

What is the best type of jar to buy?

Personally I like a glass top jar with a wire top for sealing. It is easy to handle when empty and filled, and is good to be used time and again until it is broken. However, the screw top and vacuum seal styles may be used with safety, provided the lids and rubber rings are whole and good.

How can one tell the best rubbers?

Before buying a rubber, take one from the box and give it these tests. Pull it twice its length, bend together as if making a crease, then twist one side several turns. If it comes back to shape, after this treatment, it is a good rubber. If it does not, it is not safe to trust, and another kind should be tested.

What equipment is essential?

Equipment for home canning need not be elaborate. A flat bottomed vessel with a cover, tall enough to hold jars in a vertical position, and a rack or false bottom, to hold them away from too close contact with the fire, are needed for sterilization. Then the blanching vessel for hot water into which the product is lowered for scalding, and a vessel for the cold dip may be panns or kettles used regularly for a dish. A jar lifter and rubber should be sterilized first. If longer than 30 minutes is required, then washing and scalding are sufficient.

Should the vessel in which the product is being cooked be covered?

Always, as much of the flavor is lost thru the steam.

What should be done if the rubber slips out from under the lid when the jar is being sealed?

If the rubber stretches and slips from under the lid while sealing the jar, remove this rubber, put on a new one that has been sterilized, return the jar to the hot water bath and boil five minutes longer.

Why does the jar lose liquid when cooking?

Jars lose liquid in cooking if they are filled with cold instead of hot liquid; if the liquid is not "padded" well around the product; if the product is insufficiently blanched; if the water in the sterilizing vessel does not cover the top of the jar, or if the lid on the jar fits too loosely.

Will the products keep if the jar is not full or should more material be added to fill the jar?

Canned products will keep, if properly sterilized, even tho the jar is not full. If after shrinkage, more material should be added, it would necessitate complete sterilization. Water need not be added to fill a jar after sterilization since there is no special need for preserving water.

Is sugar always necessary to keep fruits? How much should be used? Is salt essential to keep vegetables?

Salt is added to vegetables for flavor only, as is sugar to fruits, tho both, because of their osmotic pressure, keep the product in better shape and color. The syrup considered standard is two measures of sugar and one of water, and is the one most extensively used. This is sweet enough for acid fruits and may be made with less sugar for the more sweet fruits.

How long should different products be boiled?

The following time table for blanching and sterilizing in cold pack canning is given in bulletin No. 41, Agricultural Extension Department, Iowa State College:

For safety, add 30 minutes to the boiling time given for asparagus, beans, greens and peas.

(C) This time table as quoted will be found on page 272 of "Home Economics for Housewives," by Homer, Platt and Hite; or in the "Manual of Home Economics," by Maria F. Marsden.

When should one begin to count time?

Count time when the water is at a jumping boil and keep it boiling constantly for the time given. If undercooked, the product will not keep while overcooked, it may lose its flavor, color and texture.

Why do glass jars sometimes crack upon being removed from the hot water bath?

A hot jar often breaks because it is suddenly exposed to a cool draft, and the contraction of the surface of the glass causes the crack or break. It should be protected from any cool air currents while and immediately after it is being removed from the water.

Should the lid on a screw top jar be tightened after the jar has cooled?

Be sure that all seals are perfect while they are still hot, but do not tighten the lid of a screw top jar after it has cooled, as to do so would break the seal.

Is it true that canned goods should be stored in a dark place?

Always store jars in a cool dark place since intense light will cause the product to lose its color.

Exceptions will necessarily arise in every home, but a few general rules, ones that have been tried and proven most satisfactory, will act as a guide to any new or doubtful home maker. Always is there mother or some kind friend to whom she may go for advice in extreme cases and experience will prove the best help of all. Even burned fingers and a few scalded jars are small items when compared to the glory of helping either the brand new or the substantial less-new husband in his efforts to fortune-find.