

News Column – Donna Krug, District Director and Family & Consumer Science Agent, K-State Research & Extension - Cottonwood Extension District

Avoid Home Canning Mistakes

Nearly every day when I bike commute I see the garden beds behind Washington School in Great Bend. The Barton County Master Gardeners and school district employees must have green thumbs, because everything looks great.

If you are enjoying abundant garden produce and are thinking about preserving things to enjoy later, remember that K-State Research and Extension has some great resources related to food preservation. We are fortunate to have Karen Blakeslee, director of our Rapid Response Center at KSU just a phone call away with answers to specific food preservation questions. I believe her “Home Canning Mistakes” article I saw in her monthly newsletter is worth sharing.

Many resources show canning methods that are not safe. Here are a few.

- Canning in the oven – Canning jars may not withstand the thermal shock and can break. Also, oven heating filled jars of food is slow and can encourage potential bacteria growth.
- Open kettle canning – This is filling jars and closing them without further heat processing. This also includes inverting jars or setting the jars in the sun. Without water bath canning or pressure canning, spoilage will likely occur and food will be lost or people may become sick.
- Electric multi-cookers – While some electric multi-cookers have a “canning” button but no research is available to back up this function. Use these appliances for cooking only!
- The jar sealed, it has to be safe! – What happened prior to putting a lid on the jar is critical to canned food safety. Just because a jar seals does not guarantee safety.

We have an excellent resource available at each of our Cottonwood District offices in Great Bend and Hays. So Easy to Preserve, is a canning guide researched and written by the University of Georgia Extension Service. I like the fact that it has a trouble-shooting guide to help determine what went wrong in the food preservation process. The book costs \$15.00 and is well worth it.

One other service I want to call your attention to is that we can test the dial gauge from your canner lid. Dial gauges can be examined and checked for accuracy in a matter of minutes. It is a good idea to do this check up every couple of years. Give Berny or me a call at either of our district offices to arrange a time to have your gauge tested. I will also have the tester set up at the Great Bend Farmer’s Market on August 6th and September 3rd.

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