

# Can your garden harvest but use safe methods

**BY MARGARET MILLER**  
Don't believe it for a minute when someone tells you it's possible to can food safely in the oven or in an open kettle or with aspirin or by any other short cut method.  
That's the message John Criner and Kathy Bilton of the Michigan State University cooperative extension service are bringing to groups in economy and ecology-minded home makers. The two home economists have been traveling throughout the area filling requests for talks on preserving the harvests of this summer's small gardens.  
Tips they are giving in abundance and on just about any food preservation question asked—but they continue to emphasize the message that only the steam pressure method, which raises the temperature of food to 240 degrees, is adequate for low-acid

foods like beans, beets, corn and meats.  
MS. CRINER said men have attended some of the lectures she has given, and they are the ones who often press her to agree that other methods can be used safely.  
"My answer to questions like that," she said, "is that I would not use such methods of canning and then feed the results to someone I loved."  
The manual on canning that the home economists distribute with their talks puts the warning another way.  
"Persons who use unreliable canning methods may have 'good luck' for years," the publication reads. "This is because heat-resistant bacteria are not always present. When these spoilage micro-organisms are absent, underprocessed foods may keep."  
"But if they are present, under-processed foods will spoil!"

**THE DANGER** of botulism poisoning is, of course, the major threat in safely canning of low-acid foods, Ms. Criner said. She added that the extension service is taking its lectures to as many groups as possible because that deadly poisoning increased last year in the United States and the consensus was that a major reason was the increase in home canning.  
"And we know that this year even more people are canning the vegetables they have grown or purchased in an effort to cut food costs," she said.  
"Our lecture requests have increased 170 per cent over last year." In the local lectures, she also told how to recognize possible spoilage in home-preserved foods.  
"There will be a cloudy appearance, and possibly an off odor," she said. "If there is any reason to suspect spoilage, the food should be boiled for 10 minutes. This will not destroy the botulism, but it will increase the odor and make it certain that the food should not be eaten."  
"If this happens, it's also important to sterilize—not just wash—the jar it was in."

"This does not stop just by putting the vegetables in the freezer."  
is that what you can is only as good as the fruit you start with."  
**BESIDES DISTRIBUTING** booklets on canning and freezing and recommending use of shelves of special book collections on the subject being offered in local libraries, Ms. Criner offered some tips to the women who attended her lectures.  
She suggested that women forget the old adage that fruit slightly bruised or maybe past prime is "good enough for canning."  
"I can remember hearing that when I was a child," she said, "but the fact

in canning with artificial sugar look for recipes given by the manufacturers and try them. "but our experience has been that people are not too terribly happy with the results."  
**AND FINALLY**, Ms. Criner offered a recipe for getting the most out of canning by doing it in small lots.  
"Don't get so immersed in canning that you have bottles all over the house and it's a terrible chore," she said. "Try planning to process a few jars each day and see if you don't find it a really enjoyable part of home making."



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**THE STEAM-PRESSURE** method, Ms. Criner said, involves use of a heavy kettle with a lid that can be clamped or locked down to make it steam-tight.  
If people make the investment of a pressure cooker for this kind of canning, she added, "we recommend that they look at the recipe book that comes with it and maybe use it for other kinds of cannings—soups, chili sauce and meats as well as just garden vegetables."  
The water-bath method, which processes food at 212 degrees, is safe for fruits, tomatoes and other high-acid foods, Ms. Criner said, because the boiling temperature destroys the bacteria, enzymes, molds and yeasts which can spoil such products.  
The food preservation talks also covered jam and jelly making and the safety features involved, as well as freezing vegetables and fruits.  
"We are not concerned much about food safety in freezing processes," Ms. Criner said. "In this case, it's a matter of loss of quality and nutrients if improper methods are used."  
The commonest mistake made in freezing, she added, is failure to blanch, the process by which the vegetables to be frozen are placed in boiling water for a few minutes and then removed.  
"When you blanch, you are stopping the ripening process," she explained.



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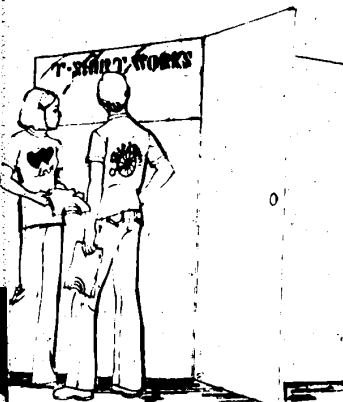
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