

Canning Early Fruits and Vegetables

By HELEN G. LAMB

SPRING, glorious spring, is here again. The birds are making the blossom-scented air vibrate with their happy songs and the earth is luxuriously verdant. This is the time, too, for big, luscious berries, shiny new stalks of rhubarb and crisp, green vegetables. It just makes one's mouth water to even think of them, and the enterprising housewife is busy counting the empty cans in her fruit and vegetable closet, for she knows these spring products do not last long, and if her family is to enjoy spring goodies all the year round she must can them as soon as they are ready.

A great deal of time can be saved if the jars in the cellar are brought to the kitchen and prepared for use. They should be washed in hot soap suds, examined carefully for cracks or flaws and the covers tested. Many a can of food is spoiled because of carelessness in testing the covers. The ordinary mason or screw-top jar should be partly filled with water, the rubber and cover adjusted, and the whole turned upside down. If there are any leaks they should be remedied by smoothing down the edges of the cover, or the top should be discarded and another one tested out. The cost of a new top is insignificant compared with the value of the food that will spoil if a defective top is used.

Glass-top jars are tested without water or rubber. If the top closes with a good click the jar will seal tightly.

All rubbers should be stretched to make sure they are pliable and elastic rather than brittle, and any that do not spring back to original size thrown away.

Choosing fruit jars of a size that will fit your needs is an important item. Many housewives every year waste much food by filling jars which happen to be convenient at the time rather than planning the size required for the needs of their own family. It is very seldom that fruit or vegetables carried over for a second or third meal are eaten. Quart or pint, or even two-quart jars are good for fruits which are to be used for pies, but the size should be determined by the number in the family. Pint or half-pint jars are a convenient size for berries or preserves. Conserves should be canned in small jars or glasses as they are very rich and a little goes a long way.

Anyone who is not familiar with the principles of cold pack canning should carefully follow directions outlined in any of the good bulletins published on that subject. Such bulletins may be secured from the Extension Division of Iowa State College.

Strawberries canned by open-kettle



"Your family will appreciate your efforts to preserve the good things that spring brings, for all the year round."

method lose their red color and become mushy and very unattractive. For this reason the cold-pack method is much more satisfactory. The berries need not be blanched or cold dipped before packing in the jars. By packing tightly a quart of berries may be packed in a pint jar. Add a heavy syrup and sterilize the jars in a water bath in which the water is not quite boiling—just simmering hard for thirty-five minutes. The shape, color and flavor are very much better than if the berries are sterilized in boiling water. This method may be used for any kind of berries.

Straight canned strawberries, however, are not favored by many because of their somewhat dead flavor, but a few such cans will come in wonderfully handy next fall and winter for delicious gelatin dishes, sponges, whips, puddings, ices and other frozen dishes.

The sun-cooked method has also proven satisfactory, not only for strawberries, but for cherries, raspberries and currants as well. The fruit is laid on a flat

surface and covered with a very thick syrup. Allow to stand under glass cover in the sun for three or four days, depending upon the heat of the sun, bringing it indoors each night. Unless a very thick syrup is used the fruit will become mushy and difficult to handle. When the fruit is plumped and the syrup thickened almost to a jelly, can with an equal amount of sugar and you will have a product fit for a queen's taste.

Many palatable conserves can be prepared during the berry season that will satisfy the most particular tastes. One especial favorite is strawberry-pineapple conserve in the proportion of one pineapple and three oranges to one quart of strawberries. Use equal parts of sugar and pulp.

Another mixture that is especially fine in the way of a conserve is a combina-

tion of fresh ripe gooseberries and strawberries. As the gooseberries ripen so much later than the strawberries the cans of strawberries must be opened and combined with the gooseberries when they are ripe. The gooseberries give a red color and a tart flavor to the strawberries and the result will delight the most fastidious tastes.

Rhubarb has its place in the spring canning schedule, too, and may be used in the preparation of various appetizing dainties that everyone likes. It may be canned successfully by several methods, but in no one of them does it keep its shape and appearance particularly well. However, the rich, tart flavor is so refreshing that we do not mind the appearance. Rhubarb and pineapple in equal parts canned together make a good combination both for flavor and appearance. A combination of strawberries and rhubarb in the proportion of one quart of strawberries to one pint of rhubarb makes a desirable conserve, or a marmalade may be prepared from two quarts

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TIME TABLE

Products	Scald or Blanch Minutes	Hot Water bath at boiling temperature minutes	Pounds Pressure	Minutes with Pressure
Strawberries -----	No	8 to 16	3	8
Raspberries -----	No	16	3	8
Gooseberries -----	No	16	3	8
Currants -----	No	16	3	8
Cherries -----	No	16	3	8
Blackberries -----	No	16	3	8
Rhubarb -----	No	10 to 16	3	8
Beets -----	6	90	10	15
Carrots -----	6	90	10	15
Dandelions -----	10 to 15	90	10	40
Greens, all other kinds.	10 to 15	120	10	40

and we take such joy in our possessions that friends and families are never at a loss for Christmas suggestions.

Shall the modern girl start a hope box? No, and yes! If that hope box has a lock, and smells of lavender, and if it is in her room at home filled with hopes and dreams of a distant day, then I say "No!" But if that box or cupboard holds linen, silver, and dishes that she loves, and if she lives with these possessions and uses them to make her room more homey and her every day more livable then I say "Absolutely Yes!" A woman loves pretty linen, silver, and dishes and every woman should collect about her, table appointments that express her personality and give her joy.

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cubed rhubarb, one package of raisins, two oranges and one-fourth pound almonds. Spiced rhubarb is also a general favorite.

In England and our country also, the experiment of using a very small amount of salt for part of the sugar in making jam and marmalade has been successful. The proportions used were three-fourths cup sugar and one-half tablespoon of salt to one pound of fruit. This resulted in a product less rich and sickening than when made with all sugar, and the salt flavor disappears after five or six days standing.

Nobody likes to pit cherries for canning, but who doesn't like cherry pie piled high with whipped cream, or spiced cherries for that salad you are going to serve at club luncheon. And if you want a cherry conserve add oranges and raisins. The open-kettle method of canning has proven the most successful for cherries.

One's time should not all be spent in preparing sweets for the family, for they will need and relish green things next winter just as well as sweets. Then, too, the vitamins and minerals contained in green vegetables are most important in the diet.

The asparagus tips should be canned before they get too hard and pithy. If you want attractive, well-filled jars sort the tips, grouping those of one size and color together. Do not forget to thoroughly blanch and cold dip all vegetables. This not only loosens skins and reduces bulk, but also removes objectionable flavors and insures the keeping of the product. Intermittent sterilization is preferred by many housewives, but straight cold pack is successful for all vegetables.

It is well to watch your early beets and not let them grow too large before you can them. The small round beets averaging about forty to a quart are the most suitable for first-class packs. These are not only a good size for pickles, but will make a most attractive garnish for meat or salad dishes.

The older the beet the more chance there is for loss of color, altho well-canned beets show a slight loss of color when removed from the cooker, but will brighten up in a few days.

When preparing the beet leave one inch of the stem and all of the root while blanching, and blanch not more

than six minutes. Never peel beets, but scrape the skin off with a dull knife or rub off with the fingers. Beets more than two inches in diameter should be sliced or cubed.

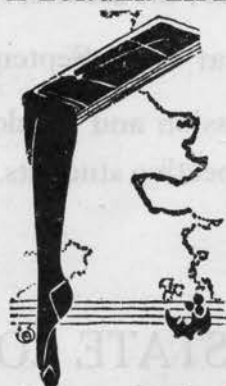
Firm small-sized carrots not more than one and one-half inches in diameter make attractive packs either whole or sliced. An unusually attractive pack is made by placing the circles in layers, putting the second layer into the space left by the first layer, and repeating until the jar is filled. The center should be filled in as each outside layer is placed against the glass.

Greens are spring tonic which may be canned to serve the year round. Don't let the dandelions, spinach, swisschard or even the beet tops get old and dry before you put away a supply. They are prepared in much the same way as other vegetables, but use care in selecting fresh, green, healthy leaves and can them the day they are picked. Thoroughly clean, place in a crate or cheesecloth, and blanch in live steam, either in improvised or regular commercial steamer for fifteen minutes. Cold dip, place on the table and cut into strips of convenient length. Pack tight in jars, but unless the product is thoroughly blanched be very careful not to pack too tightly as the heat may not penetrate and the product is apt to spoil, add hot water and season to taste. The addition of boiled bacon, chipped beef or even olive oil will somewhat improve the flavor. If meat is added the time of sterilization must be the time required for meat, or the product will spoil.

After removing your jars from the hot water bath, set on a damp cloth to keep them from cracking and keep out of cold drafts. Turn the jars upside down to test for leakage.

What a reward of labor to see the rows of neatly labeled jars in your preserve closet, and how your family will appreciate your efforts to preserve the good things that spring brings, for all the year round.

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