



News Column for Week of July 23, 2018

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Foods and Nutrition

Keeping Home-Preserved Foods Safe

Commercial foods are typically prepared in an approved food processing facility and required to display a "best by" or expiration date. When foods are preserved in the home, however, food safety and security depend on the cook.

The failure to follow a tested recipe or to store food in a safe place can jeopardize food safety, yet recognizing when home preserved foods are past their prime or no longer safe-to-eat is sometimes a challenge, said Karen Blakeslee, Kansas State University Research and Extension food scientist.

Tell-tale signs that suggest food is suspect and should be discarded include:

- * Vacuum seal on the lid has been compromised; lid may pop, bulge, or show signs of rust;
- * Jar is chipped, cracked or otherwise damaged;
- * Evidence of loss of food quality, such as the presence of mold, loss or change of color, texture, or off odor.
- * Evidence of insect or rodent infestation; and
- * Date made is unknown.

Do not taste or use food from any jar that has become unsealed or shows any signs of spoilage, Blakeslee said.

To keep home canned foods safe, she recommends:

- 1) Use only tested recipes from a reliable source (such as Extension, USDA, or Ball);
- 2) Use canning equipment that is in tiptop shape. Check the pressure canner gauge annually or more frequently, if a malfunction is suspected. Replace damaged jars and containers. Use new lids;

- 3) Follow recipe directions exactly;
- 3) Label and date all home-preserved foods;
- 4) Store home canned foods in a cool, dry and dark place. Avoid attics, garages, or shelving near a water heater or other appliances that generate heat;
- 5) Use home preserved foods within one year; and
- 6) Check food storage area regularly to inspect for potential problems, such as a water leak or insect damage.

Before beginning to use your canner each year, it is recommended that pressure canner/cooker dial gauges be tested for accuracy. This can be done quickly and easily in any of the Southwind Extension offices at no cost.

More information about food preservation is available at K-State Research and Extension Southwind offices, and by contacting Kathy at 620-365-2242 or by email at kmcewan@ksu.edu.

An additional resource is the National Center for Home Food Preservation, located at the University of Georgia and online at: <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp>.