

News Column for use week of April 29, 2024
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Before Following That Canning Trend You Saw on Social Media, Reach Out to the Extension Office to determine if it is Safe!

I was surprised to receive a couple of questions this spring about dry canning. I feel I must not be the only one receiving questions this spring about this dangerous practice because it was the main topic in the March/April 2024 issue of the Preserve It Fresh, Preserve It Safe newsletter. How timely! You can read the article below and learn more about why the practice is dangerous. Questions can be directed to, Kaitlin Moore, Nutrition, Food Safety & Health Agent, at 785-243-8185.

You may have heard about “dry canning” on social media. Maybe you have heard acquaintances talking about it. “Dry canning” is not really “canning.” The practice of sealing flour, nuts, beans, oats, or other foods in jars after heating them in some way, such as in an oven, is promoted as a way to extend the shelf life of foods. Sometimes the lid and ring are placed on the jar before heating, and sometimes, after heating. While the jars may “seal” due to the heat, a true vacuum seal is not created.

Why is dry canning unsafe?

All foods contain some amount of water. Moisture pockets could remain in the food in a sealed jar. The moisture level may be great enough to support the growth of spores from bacteria such as *Clostridium botulinum*. By heating nuts or other fat-containing foods, you may be promoting rancidity and its off flavors and smells. You may, in fact, be decreasing the shelf life of foods.

Current best practices are to store dry goods in a sealed container in a cool, dark, and dry place. Refrigerating or freezing flour and other grains and nuts will extend their shelf life. Dry beans have a long shelf life, but it can be extended with freezing.

More recently, you may have heard about dry-canning vegetables, such as raw or cooked potatoes, without any added liquid. This is followed by processing in a pressure canner. Dry canning vegetables is especially risky and could result in the production of the toxin that causes botulism. Safe canning of vegetables requires liquid to allow for heat transfer throughout the jar during processing, followed by pressure canning according to the current guidance. The vegetables without added liquid, therefore, are not heated evenly during processing and the bacterial spores are not destroyed. Procedures have been developed to ensure that food in jars remains safe. Low-acid foods, such as vegetables, must be pressure canned (or frozen) following research-tested procedures to ensure safety.

Current best practices are to contact your local Extension office or website for research-based information about safely canning a wide range of vegetables, fruits, and other foods. The following website provides links to Extension resources in the 12 states of the North Central region: ncrfsma.org/north-central-food-safety-extension-network-ncfsen. You can subscribe to the Preserve It Fresh, Preserve It Safe Newsletter here: extension.missouri.edu/programs/food-preservation