

Prepare to Preserve

I periodically write about best practices for food preservation using research-based resources from K-State Research and Extension and other partners. Here is my confession - I am a novice with actual hands-on experience, especially with canning. But that is about to change. Over the next several weeks, I will share my adventures and I hope to encourage you to try something new.

My first task has been to review my canning resources. I have a hoarded stash of jelly size jars, a few screw bands and some used canning lids. Per best practices, you should always use new lids (the Ball Corporation recommends that the new lids are used within 5 years). Thus, I need to find canning lids (which some have reported difficult to find at local stores). I also have a “beginners kit” for water bath canning which features a plastic basket to immerse a few jars.

What I need to check is the status of my pressure canner. I think the pot is in the basement and the lid with the dial gauge is hidden in an office closet. A free service that K-State Research and Extension is testing the dial gauge to confirm that it reads the correct pressure. Dial gauges can be replaced, but I may have to find or order a replacement.

My current task is reviewing what food I’d enjoy preserving (and something my family will actually eat in the future). Since my small garden only produces enough for us to eat, I’ll need to consider what is still “in season” that I could purchase from farmers market vendors or other gardeners.

If you are interested in food preservation (or want a refresher course), I recommend the free “Field to Fork” webinars presented by North Dakota State University: <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork/webinars>. Food safety must be a priority with any method of food preservation.

For more tips, visit the Cowley County Extension Facebook page or contact our office at 221-5450 or 441-4565.

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan.