

## Read the Instructions

You have likely started a task and the first direction is “read all the instructions before beginning.” This is especially true with food preservation. It is also why I am still “in progress” with my food preservation project.

Last week I decided I wanted to do hands-on activities with food preservation, specifically canning. I couldn't find new canning lids locally but did purchase a dozen “pint” size jars (that included lids and rings). While at the store, the “pasta sauce” tomato mix caught my eye (and luckily, needs pint size jars).

The tomato mix package mentioned “prepare home canning jars and lids according to manufacturer's instructions for sterilized jars.” I expected instructions printed on paper but then realized that the instructions were printed on the bottom of the box. The pictures were helpful but I noticed that I need to acquire a jar funnel, jar tongs and find a ruler.

The recipe makes 5 pints but needs 6 pounds of fresh tomatoes. I have four tomato plants and picked enough to fill my medium colander. When I used my food scale, it was less than 6 pounds but I could utilize canned tomatoes to supplement. But why would I use canned tomatoes to make another canned product?!

I proceeded with washing my fresh tomatoes. I scalded 3 minutes in boiling water and dipped into cold water. The aroma of scalding tomatoes brought back memories of being tasked with this as a child. I'm still fascinated about how the tomato skins slide off.

The peeled, stemmed and cored tomatoes went into my blender to be pureed. I did 3 batches, reviewed the package instructions and realized I need 10 cups tomatoes. I had 5 cups (and a bunch of seeds). If only I had read all the instructions!

Thus, I'm off to my neighbor's house to acquire more tomatoes. Watch for more details about my food preservation adventures next week. 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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