Food Preservation Programs

Did you know?
Home-canned vegetables are the most common cause of botulism outbreaks in the United States. From 1996 to 2014, there were 210 outbreaks of foodborne botulism reported to CDC. Of the 145 outbreaks that were caused by home-prepared foods, 43 outbreaks, or 30%, were from home-canned vegetables. These outbreaks often occurred because home canners did not follow canning instructions, did not use pressure canners, ignored signs of food spoilage, or didn’t know they could get botulism from improperly preserving vegetables. The best way to prevent foodborne botulism is by carefully following instructions for safe home canning.

Highlight
ISU Extension and Outreach offers a home food preservation program, Preserve the Taste of Summer (PTTS). The four hands-on workshops are taught by Vera Stokes, Nutrition and Wellness Specialist and provide the most current USDA-approved food preservation recommendations. Topics include hot water bath canning (salsa making)/freezing, jams and dehydrating, pickle making and pressure canning. In 2018, Preserve the Taste of Summer workshops were delivered in Muscatine and Cedar counties to 14 participants.

Ten individuals attended the Pressure Canning workshop in Muscatine. Results from evaluations completed by nine of the participants after the workshop indicated that all the participants increased their knowledge about canning low acid foods, using a pressure canner and adjusting for altitude when canning. In addition, a participant plans to purchase a pressure canner “because I am less afraid of the process now” and another participant learned that using untested recipes are not safe for home canning.

The nutrition and wellness specialist teamed with the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum to present monthly workshops in West Branch from June through October. After attending the Pickle Making Workshop, a participant put her skills to good use by canning several jars of pickled okra and vegetable relish. After serving the relish to her extended family, she called to let me know the “relish was a hit” and she planned to attend more classes.

Note: The registration and program requirements are currently being revised. Please contact Vera Stokes, vstokes@iastate or 563-210-0587, for additional information.