



CLIPPINGS a weekly column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

Heard About Dry Canning? *Don't Try It!*

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Gardening and cooking are fun ways to be creative, eat healthy and get more physical activity.

Pandemic-induced gardening, home cooking and home food preservation are on the rise. Gardening and cooking allow for creativity and experimentation; however, home food preservation has serious food safety concerns if not done correctly.

According to the National Center for Home Food Preservation, the latest version of people making up their own method of canning is potentially very hazardous. It involves putting raw vegetables (such as corn, green beans, carrots, beets or other vegetables) in canning jars with no added liquid, applying lids and pressure canning for the same amount of time as if you had added the water to cover required in the USDA method.

What is hazardous about this “dry canning” of vegetables? The absence of liquid in the jar effects the heat processing of the food. It is possible that these vegetables may not get hot enough in the center of the food, even in a pressure canner, to destroy the botulism spores. Spores are more sensitive to wet heat than dry heat. They die in hot dry air much slower than in hot water.

The risk is botulism, a food poisoning disease that can be fatal. Botulism toxin can be present in canned vegetables without any visual changes to the food. An improperly and unsafe home-canned vegetable can look, smell and taste just fine.

What about people that have tried this dry canning method, like it, and have not gotten sick? Some people have been lucky. Bacteria are not distributed evenly throughout our environment. But the next time, *Clostridium botulinum* or other harmful bacteria could be in the jar and botulism poisoning could result.

Home canning of food is not a creative activity. Safety must come first. The researched processes we have for vegetables require that liquid cover the produce in the jars (and whatever is the type of liquid called for in the described procedure with each process, which is usually water for plain vegetables).

The USDA low-acid home canning recommended processes are meant to be used with the full procedures as written — how to select and prepare the food, how to fill jars, how to manage the step by step canning process in a recommended pressure canner, and how to make altitude adjustments.

Be food-safe when home canning. Utilize properly researched and tested procedures.

At Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, we use the National Center for Home Food Preservation for USDA-approved recipes and procedures for home food preservation. We also have resources available to all for free download at <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Topic/Food-Nutrition-and-Health>.

Want to learn more? ISU Extension and Outreach is offering a free one-hour online course, Food Preservation 101. There are still spots open in the Aug. 20 and Sept. 10 classes. Register online at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/preservation-101>.

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