



## *Botulism Survivor Urges Safe Canning*

Take it from one who has survived botulism. Get educated and learn about safely canning foods before you start canning.

While Debbie Miller survived botulism, it was a very long recovery. And all of it could have been prevented. Now she is on a mission to tell her story and educate home canners about what could happen if improper methods are used.

Debbie canned green beans. While she did use a pressure canner, she had no idea how to use it safely to can the beans. The dial gauge canner was not calibrated correctly and she used it like a water bath canner. Therefore, the beans did not reach the proper temperature to kill *Clostridium botulinum*. After eating the green beans, she had double vision, swollen tongue, muscle weakness in her neck and other symptoms. Test conformed the diagnosis.

Watch and learn the Utah State University video About Debbie's Experience Watch and learn the Utah State University video: (<https://youtube/ON8FEyVHE30>) so this doesn't happen to you.

Contact your local Meadowlark Extension District Office to get your Dial gauge tested for accuracy. There is no charge and it just takes a few minutes. Gauges can be tested in Holton, Oskaloosa and Seneca Offices.

## *Pickled Asparagus Problems*

A favorite spring garden perineal is asparagus. As our weather starts to warm, those tasty fresh shoots will soon be popping out of the ground, if they haven't already.

A great way to preserve asparagus is to pickle it for a tangy addition to meals. Here's a pickled asparagus recipe ([https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can\\_06/pickled\\_asparagus.html](https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_06/pickled_asparagus.html)) that is formulated for 12-jars or pint jars from the National Center for Home Food Preservation. But after preserving your asparagus, have you noticed some little/white spots on the surface? Is it safe to eat?

The answer is yes, it is safe to eat. These little specks are called rutin. According to the University of California Extension, when vinegar is heated with vinegar, the bioflavonoid rutin is drawn out of the asparagus. It becomes insoluble and crystallizes, leaving spots on the surface of the asparagus. Commercially made pickled asparagus has an additive added to prevent this reaction.

## *Tips to Dehydrating Stone Fruits*

Dehydrated fruit is an easy way to have ready-made snacks or to add a pop of fruit to cereal, yogurt, or home-made cookies.

Dehydrating is the oldest food preservation method to remove moisture from food which prevents bacterial growth.

When drying stone fruits, such as apricots, plums, or halves of peaches and nectarines, first rinse them in running water. Remove the pits. The skin can be left on or removed. Pretreat as directed to reduce discoloration. Press the rounded side, or outside, inward to invert the fruit half. This helps expose the fruit flesh and the fruit will dry faster. If the skin is still on, place the fruit skin down on the dehydrator tray. Optimum dehydrating temperature is 140° while air circulates to pull moisture out of the fruit. Dry until pliable and leathery.

## *What About Those Presto Digital Pressure Canners?*

You might of noticed the new digital pressure canners or have questions about them. Here is advice, shared with permission, from the University of Georgia, National Center for Home Food Preservation.

Presto is a well-respected and conscientious name in the industry. The University of Georgia has not independently verified their marketing statements for you at this time. If someone wants to use this canner, they have to be willing to trust the manufacturer. Presto has carried out the research on their own to make the claim that the appliance meets USDA guidelines for processing, and so it is up to the Company to stand behind it. The type or extent of research Presto has done is not available.

It does seem like Presto is aware that they have to meet minimum temperature inside the canner, not just the pressure, which is a positive indication the Presto instruction book does not contain at least two USDA low acid processes that have special canner and water level requirements in the canner different from other low acid canned food in the USDA manual. **Therefore, follow the Presto instruction manual and not the directions from other sources including the USDA book or the NCHFP if you are going to use it.** They do put full instructions for preparing and processing foods in their manual, which is also a positive approach.

One can read through the online instruction manual (<https://www.gopresto.com/product/presto-precise-digital-pressure-canner-02144>) to see how the canner operates and the features built into the appliance.

## Strawberry-Rhubarb Jam

2 cups crushed strawberries (about 1 ½ to 2 pounds)  
2 cups chopped rhubarb (about 3 to 6 stalks)  
6 Tablespoons Ball Classic Pectin+  
¼ cup lemon juice, fresh or bottled  
5 ½ cups sugar

Wash strawberries and rhubarb under cold running water; drain. Remove stems and caps from strawberries. Crush strawberries one layer at a time using a potato masher. Measure 2 cups crushed strawberries. Remove leafy tops and root ends from rhubarb. Chop rhubarb into ½-inch pieces. Measure 2 cups chopped rhubarb.

Combine strawberries, rhubarb, pectin, and lemon juice in a large saucepan, stirring to blend in pectin. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Add sugar, stirring until sugar dissolves. Return mixture to a rolling boil that cannot be stirred down. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Remove from heat. Skim off foam if necessary. Ladle hot jam into a hot jar, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Clean jar rim. Center lid on jar and adjust band to fingertip-tight. Place jar on the rack elevated over simmering water (180°F) in boiling-water canner. Repeat until all jars are filled.

Lower the rack into simmering water. Water must cover jars by 1-inch. Adjust heat to medium-high, cover canner and bring water to a rolling boil. Process half-pint jar 10 minutes. (Remember to adjust time for altitude, if needed.) Turn off heat and remove cover. Let jars cool 5 minutes. Remove jars from canner; do not retighten bands if loose. Cool 12 hours. Check seals. Label and store jars.

Yield: about 6 half-pint jars.



Source: Ball Blue Book—  
Guide to Preserving, 2020,  
page 55.

*(Not endorsing  
this product.)*

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## Using Spring Leafy Greens Safely

A gardening favorite to plant in the spring is leafy vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, arugula and many others. They provide a lot of crunch and color to any meal. Packed with nutrients, they can help protect you from some chronic diseases.

Handle and prepare all leafy greens safely as there have been foodborne illness outbreaks associated with these fresh foods. Most of these are never heated before eating, so it is important to rinse them under running water. Do not soak in water as this can spread contamination. Research has shown that rinsing in water helps remove most bacteria and dirt. Use these steps:

- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after preparing leafy greens.
- Remove bruised or damaged leaves. Remove outer layers of cabbage and lettuce heads.
- Rinse under running water. Rub gently with your fingers for better results.
- Dry leaves in a salad spinner or with a clean paper towel to remove moisture.

## Try Your Hand at Making Sauerkraut

Cabbage is popular in the spring, so try turning it into sauerkraut. But how do you know when fermentation is complete?

Fermentation naturally stops as acids accumulate to extend that further growth of desirable bacteria cannot take place. The to tan. The bubbling ceases and the color should have changes from green/white. It should be tart but still have a firm texture. The brine should not be cloudy.

If mold is present, has a slimy texture, or has a bad odor, do not eat. Fully fermented sauerkraut can be stored in the freezer, canned or frozen. For more information check out this resource: (<https://extension.psu.edu/lets-preserve-fermentation-sauerkraut-and-pickles>).

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