September 23rd marks the first full day of fall. Most gardens are winding down, and you may be even starting to think about storing your canning equipment until spring. Before packing up and forgetting about those items that served you so well this past preserving season, take time to give them a little tender loving care! You will be so glad you did next year when you see those first signs of vegetables in the garden and fruits beginning to ripen.

First, start with your biggest investment, the pressure canner. For safe operation next season, clean the vent and safety valve. To clean the vent, draw a clean string or narrow strip of cloth through the opening. Check to make sure the safety valve is free of debris and operates freely. Clean the valve by removing, if possible, or following the manufacturer’s instructions.

Next, check the gasket which is the rubber or rubber-like compound that helps seal the edges of the canner and lid to prevent steam from escaping. Gaskets are removable for cleaning or replacement by following the manufacturer’s directions. If needed, new gaskets can be ordered from the canner manufacturer or found at hardware stores.

Some canners do not have gaskets and use a metal to metal seal instead. If your canner has a dial gauge, go ahead and mark your calendar now for a time to have your gauge tested in early spring. Contact the Extension Office for information on checking the accuracy of the gauge. This should be done well in advance of canning season so that if the gauge tests off more than 1 pound of pressure at 5, 10, or 15 pounds, it can be replaced.

Darkened surface on the inside of an aluminum canner can be cleaned by filling it above the darkened line with a mixture of 1 tablespoon cream of tartar to each quart of water. Place the canner on the stove, heat water to a boil, and boil covered until the dark deposits disappear. Sometimes stubborn deposits may require the addition of more cream of tartar. Empty the canner and wash it with hot soapy water, rinse and dry. (Hint: deposits from hard water may be reduced if you add 1 tablespoon of white vinegar to the water in the canner while you process your jars.)

Store the canner with crumpled clean paper towels in the bottom and around the rack. This will help absorb moisture and odors. Place the lid upside down on the canner. Never put the lid on the canner and seal it.

Once your canner is properly stored, take time to inventory jars and two piece lids. If properly used and stored, jars can last indefinitely. As you empty jars during the winter, check for any chips or breaks, wash and store in a safe place. Two-piece lids consist of a flat metal disc and a separate metal screw band. After canning, screw bands should be removed once the jars have sealed, instead of leaving them on the jars during storage. Wash and dry the screw bands completely and put them away in a dry place. Bands can be used over and over, unless they rust. The flat lid is used only once and then discarded after the jar of food is opened.

Designate a clean and dry storage area for your canning equipment and utensils. Use clear storage boxes, stackable racks, and other organizer accessories to make a food preservation storage center. Come spring, you’ll be ready for another year!
**Meat Mania!**

**Strips, Cubes, or Chunks of Meat** *(Beef, bear, lamb, pork, veal, venison)*

**Procedure:** Choose quality chilled meat. Remove excess fat. Soak strong-flavored wild meats for 1 hour in brine water containing 1 tablespoon of salt per quart. Remove large bones.

**Hot Pack:** Precook meat until rare by roasting, stewing, or browning in a small amount of fat. Add 1 teaspoon of salt per quart to the jar, if desired. Fill hot jars with pieces and add boiling broth, meat drippings, water, or tomato juice (especially with wild game), leaving 1-inch headspace.

**Raw Pack:** Add 1 teaspoon of salt per quart to the jar, if desired. Fill hot jars with raw meat pieces, leaving 1-inch headspace. Do not add liquid.

Wipe jar rims with a dampened clean paper towel. Adjust lids and process.

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**Recommended process times for Strips, Cubes, or Chunks of Meat in a Dial-Gauge Pressure Canner**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style of Pack</th>
<th>Jar Size</th>
<th>Process Time</th>
<th>Pressure at 0-2,000ft</th>
<th>Pressure at 2,000-4,000ft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hot or Raw</td>
<td>Pint</td>
<td>75 min</td>
<td>11 lb</td>
<td>12 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot or Raw</td>
<td>Quart</td>
<td>90 min</td>
<td>11 lb</td>
<td>12 lb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommended process times for Strips, Cubes, or Chunks of Meat in a Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style of Pack</th>
<th>Jar Size</th>
<th>Process Time</th>
<th>Pressure at 0-1,000ft</th>
<th>Pressure above 1,000 ft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hot or Raw</td>
<td>Pint</td>
<td>75 min</td>
<td>10 lb</td>
<td>15 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot or Raw</td>
<td>Quart</td>
<td>90 min</td>
<td>10 lb</td>
<td>15 lb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From: *USDA’s Complete Guide to Home Canning*

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Thank you to those that have responded to my survey about these newsletters. Your feedback is extremely valuable! If you haven’t already completed it, please respond as soon as possible. Your input helps to show the educational impact the Searcy County Extension Service is making in our county. I do plan to continue with a monthly food preservation newsletter. Also, I will be offering a few food preservation workshop in the winter, so be watching for more information.
Meat Stock (Broth)

**Beef:** Saw or crack fresh trimmed beef bones to enhance extraction of flavor. Rinse bones and place in large stockpot or kettle. Cover bones with water, add pot cover, and simmer 3 to 4 hours. Remove bones, cool broth, and pick off meat. Skim off fat. Add meat trimmings removed from bones to broth, and reheat to boiling. Fill hot jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel. Adjust lids and process as directed below.

**Chicken or turkey:** Place large carcass bones (with most of meat removed) in a large stock pot. Add enough water to cover bones, cover pot, and simmer 30 to 45 minutes or until remaining attached meat can be easily stripped from bones. Remove bones and pieces. Cool broth and strip meat. Discard excess fat, and return meat trimmings to broth. Reheat to boiling and fill jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel. Adjust lids and process as directed below.

### Recommended process time for Meat Stock in a dial-gauge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jar Size</th>
<th>Process Time</th>
<th>0 - 2,000 ft</th>
<th>2,001 - 4,000 ft</th>
<th>4,001 - 6,000 ft</th>
<th>6,001 - 8,000 ft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hot Pints</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11 lb</td>
<td>12 lb</td>
<td>13 lb</td>
<td>14 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Quarts</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Recommended process time for Meat Stock in a weighted-gauge pressure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jar Size</th>
<th>Process Time</th>
<th>Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 - 1,000 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Pints</td>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>10 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Quarts</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**JUST A REMINDER**

For meat, poultry, fish, and game, all should be trimmed of gristle and bruised spots before canning. The pieces should be somewhat uniform, and they should be sized for serving. A small amount of fat on top of the jar is acceptable; however, excess fat indicates fat left on the meat. This fat can melt and climb the sides of the jar. Meat may or may not be covered with liquid; liquid should be clear and may be slightly jellied; less than 1/2” fat on chicken and beef and 1/4” on pork.
PREPARING SAFER JERKY

Jerky is a lightweight, dried meat product that is a handy food for backpackers, campers and outdoor sports enthusiasts. It requires no refrigeration. Jerky can be made from almost any lean meat, including beef, pork, venison or smoked turkey breast. (Raw poultry is generally not recommended for use in making jerky because of the texture and flavor of the finished product.)

Raw meats can be contaminated with microorganisms that cause disease. These harmful bacteria can easily multiply on moist, high protein foods like meat and poultry and can cause illness if the products are not handled correctly. If pork or wild game is used to make jerky, the meat should be treated to kill the Trichinella parasite before it is sliced and marinated. This parasite causes the disease, trichinosis. To treat the meat, freeze a portion that is 6 inches or less thick at 5°F or below for at least 20 days. Freezing will not eliminate bacteria from the meat.

General Tips For Safe Food Handling

The following general tips for safe handling are based on USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline recommendations.

- Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw meats.
- Use clean equipment and utensils.
- Keep meat and poultry refrigerated at 40°F or below. Use ground beef and poultry within 2 days, red meats within 3 to 5 days or freeze for later use.
- Thaw frozen meat in the refrigerator, not on the kitchen counter.
- Marinate meat in the refrigerator. Do not save and re-use marinade.

When preparing jerky from wild game, it is important to remember that the wound location and skill of the hunter can affect the safety or the meat. If the animal is wounded in such a way that the contents of its gut come in contact with the meat or the hunter’s hands while dressing the meat, fecal bacteria can contaminate the meat. It is best to avoid making jerky from this meat and use it only in ways that it will be thoroughly cooked. Deer carcasses should be rapidly chilled to avoid bacterial growth. The risk of food-borne illness from home-dried jerky can be decreased by allowing the internal temperature of the meat to reach 160°F, but in such a way as to prevent case hardening. Two methods can be used: heating meat strips in marinade before drying or heating the dried jerky strips in an oven after the drying process is completed. Directions for both methods are included. When the strips are heated in a marinade before drying, drying times will be reduced. Color and texture will differ from traditional jerky.

Preparing the Meat

Partially freeze meat to make slicing easier. The thickness of the meat strips will make a difference in the safety of the methods recommended. Slice meat no thicker than ¼-inch. Trim and discard all fat from meat because it becomes rancid quickly. If a chewy jerky is desired, slice with the grain. Slice across the grain if a more tender, brittle jerky is preferred. A tenderizer can be used according to package directions, if desired. The meat can be marinated for flavor and tenderness. Marinade recipes may include oil, salt, spices and acid ingredients such as vinegar, lemon juice, teriyaki, or soy sauce or wine.
Combine all ingredients. Place strips of meat in a shallow pan and cover with marinade. Cover and refrigerate 1 to 2 hours or overnight. Products marinated for several hours may be more salty than some people prefer. If you choose to heat the meat prior to drying to decrease the risk of foodborne illness, do so at the end of the marination time. To heat, bring the strips and marinade to a boil and boil 5 minutes before draining and drying. If strips are more than ¼ inch thick, the length of time may need to be increased. If possible, check the temperature of several strips with a metal stem-type thermometer to determine that 160°F has been reached.

Drying the Meat

Remove meat strips from the marinade and drain on clean, absorbent towels. Arrange strips on dehydrator trays or cake racks placed on baking sheets for oven drying. Place the slices close together, but not touching or overlapping. Place the racks in a dehydrator or oven preheated to 140°F. Dry until a test piece cracks but does not break when it is bent (10 to 24 hours for samples not heated in marinade). Samples heated in marinade will dry faster. Begin checking samples after 3 hours. Once drying is completed, pat off any beads of oil with clean, absorbent towels and cool. Remove strips from the racks. Cool. Package in glass jars or heavy plastic food storage bags.

If the strips were not heated in marinade prior to drying, they can be heated in an oven after drying as an added safety measure. Place strips on a baking sheet, close together, but not touching or overlapping. For strips originally cut ¼ inch thick or less, heat 10 minutes in an oven preheated to 275°F. (Thicker strips may require longer heating to reach 160°F.)

Making Jerky From Ground Meat

Jerky can be made from ground meat using special presses to form or shape the product. Disease-causing microorganisms are more difficult to eliminate in ground meat than in whole meat strips. If ground meat is used, follow the general tips for safe handling tips listed previously. Be sure to follow the dehydrator manufacturer’s directions carefully when heating the product at the end of drying time. Again, an internal temperature of 160°F is necessary to eliminate disease-causing bacteria such as *E. coli* O157:H7, if present.

Storing the Jerky

Properly dried jerky will keep at room temperature 2 weeks in a sealed container. For best results, to increase shelf life and maintain best flavor and quality, refrigerate or freeze jerky.

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It’s finally here!

The 6th edition of *So Easy to Preserve* is finally available for purchase. The book costs $18.00 each. If you would like to order one, please let me know by October 3rd. If 12 or more are ordered at the same time, the books will be $12.00 each. Money will be due upon picking up the book.

Reliable Preservation Resources:

- USDA’s 2009 Edition *Complete Guide to Home Canning*
- 4th or 5th Edition of *So Easy to Preserve*
- National Center for Food Preservation website
- *Recipes from Extension Services* (nation-wide)

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