

4-H FOOD PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

Canning, Freezing and Food Drying

Helping youth develop life skills is part of the goal of 4-H. The following are guidelines for providing learning experiences in the food preservation area. These ideas are designed to help youth acquire the life skills that will help them and their families manage and extend their resources in a variety of ways.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL MEMBERS

Learn basic information about nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

Learn food preservation skills.

Learn information on foods of many cultures.

Develop skills in food buying.

Learn about careers in the food industry.

Learn tips in safe food handling and kitchen safety.

Learn skills for safely preserving foods by canning, freezing or drying.

Learn to use and maintain equipment properly.

There are many bulletins, guides and activity ideas available through the Extension office.

No freezing exhibits are to be left for display. Please make a poster including a picture of the exhibit, member's name, age, date of preparation, and name of product frozen. The poster should be on display.

For the fair, classes are divided into young, junior and senior age categories. The Young category is age 9-11; Junior is 12-14; Senior is 15-19.

CANNING

To assist in the judging process and to ensure the safety of home canned foods, we recommend following the general guidelines listed below. In addition, the use of the Ball Blue Book or USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning will be beneficial in providing up-to-date information. It may be necessary to open home canned food entries to inspect for judging purposes. Home canned products will not be tasted.

- Label glass container to include member's name, name of product, age, date of preparation, processing method used, and length of processing time.
- To be eligible for the Ball Premium Food Preservation Award, Ball products (jars, bands & caps) must be used.
- Home canned foods to be judged must have been prepared within a one-year period prior to judging date.
- All entries must be heat processed following Ball Corporation or USDA guidelines. The two approved methods are: boiling-water bath canning for high acid foods and steam-pressure canning for low acid foods.
- The length of processing time and pounds of pressure used must follow Ball Corporation or USDA guidelines.

- Bands should be in place for transporting home canned products; however, bands should be removed when presented for judging. Replacing the bands for display is optional.
- An appropriate amount of headspace for the product canned should be allowed. Leave 1/4-inch headspace for jams and jellies, pickles and relishes (except sauerkraut); 1/2-inch headspace for fruits, tomatoes and sauerkraut; 1-inch headspace for vegetables.
- Product pieces should be uniform in size and packed snugly but allow for circulation of liquids. Liquids should cover the product, keeping within the headspace guidelines. Liquids should be clear and free from cloudiness and small particles. The only exception would be for canned meats.
- Air bubbles should be kept to a minimum. Gas bubbles denote spoilage and are identified by movement to the surface of the product while the jar is stationary. Any entry exhibiting spoilage of any type will be disqualified.
- Products should be free from defects or blemishes, strings, stems, seeds, pits and peels. Some recipes may require stems, pits and/or peels to remain; this is acceptable if the recipe is in keeping with approved guidelines.
- The product should retain its natural characteristic color or as nearly that of standard cooked product. It should be free from undue color loss. The texture should be tender but not overcooked. The project should maintain its shape and size appropriate for recipe or preparation method.

Young:

- Two jars of 2 different fruits
- Two jars of 2 different vegetables

Junior:

- Two jars of 2 different jams or jellies
- Three jars of 3 different fruits
- Three jars of 3 different vegetables

Senior:

- Two jars of 2 different meats (different cuts or different species)
- Two jars of 2 different pickles
- Three jars of jellies and jams consisting of 1 jelly, 1 jam and 1 of the following: preserve, conserve, marmalade, or fruit butter.
- Other exhibit related to food preservation.

FREEZING

Label glass, clear freezer container or freezer bag to include member's name, age, name of product and date frozen. No freezing exhibits are to be left for display. See general guidelines.

Young:

- Two containers or bags of 2 different fruits
- Two containers or bags of 2 different vegetables

Junior:

- Two containers or bags of 2 different jams or jellies
- Three containers or bags of three fruits
- Three containers or bags of three different vegetables

Senior:

(Wrapped in suitable freezer wrap or aluminum foil)

- Two pkgs. of 2 different meats
- Baked goods (baked or unbaked)
- Casserole dishes (recipe included)
- Other exhibit related to freezing

FOOD DRYING

Young: Two uniform 1/2 pint size jars (baby food jars) of three different herbs, fruits or vegetables

Junior: Three uniform 1/2 pint size jars (baby food jars) of three different herbs, fruits or vegetables. May also try fruit leather.

Senior: Four uniform 1/2 pint size jars (baby food jars) of four different fruits, vegetables, meat or meat jerky.