



extension
IMPACTS

Considering the dangers inherent in consuming improperly canned food, being aware of current canning recommendations is of utmost importance to home canners.

Ensuring food safety through Sheridan canning workshop

Situation:

According to a 1996 survey, more than one in four households in the country had processed canned food at home within the last two years. While more recent statistics are hard to find, it is quite evident home canning is a widespread practice in the United States. With roots dating back to the late 1700s, canning is nearly as old as the United States itself. As with many “traditional” practices, there is an abundance of canning advice and procedures passed from one generation to the next. Unfortunately, some of this advice does not follow *best practices* as identified by modern scientific research. Considering the dangers inherent in consuming improperly canned food, being aware of current canning recommendations is of utmost importance to home canners.

This program was a joint effort by the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, UW Sheridan Research and Extension Center (SREC), and the Sheridan Senior Citizens Center. One volunteer helped with instruction and also provided some of the canning equipment. SREC provided the vegetables for canning, as well as the funding necessary for the canning jars. The senior center donated the use of its kitchen and dining area. There were five collaborators involved in the planning and implementation of this program, including one volunteer.

This effort resulted in one 3-hour canning workshop in Sheridan with 20 participants. After a brief overview and a canning knowledge “pretest,” participants split into groups and worked together to can carrots and spiced green tomatoes. This allowed for the demonstration of water-bath and pressure-canning techniques. Following the hands-on portion, there was a *Canning Basics* presentation to help explain some of the methods and emphasize food safety through use of properly tested procedures.

Impacts:

Evaluation consisted of the pre and posttest scores as well as a few questions participants were asked to obtain feedback on marketing strategies and workshop content. The average score on the short posttest was 80 percent, nearly doubling the 45-percent average from the Pretest. Following is a feedback question asked, as well as a sample of responses.

What was useful about this workshop?

- *The slides going over the “major” steps and reinforcing safety, hand-outs, and Web sites were great.*
- *The pressure-canning experience, because I got to ask lots of questions.*
- *Safety issues.*
- *Good review and up-to-date info.*
- *Everything. The hands-on portion was very helpful for comprehension and retention (hopefully!). The pressure canner...I was always afraid of one.*
- *Updated info on canning-science behind methods, great PowerPoint!*
- *It was great to get hands-on experience! I liked to watch every step, not just read about it.*

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