WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for September 1, 2025
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about canning questions and answers, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

Last weekend we processed three loads of spaghetti sauce in our pressure canner. We also canned an additional four quarts of crushed tomatoes in the water bath canner. Grapes have ripened this week, so it looks like grape jelly will be in our future.

This summer I received some good questions from people about canning. In case you have wondered the same, here are some answers.

I'm supposed to be eating foods with lower sodium. Can I safely reduce the amount of salt I add to the foods I can?

Yes, you can reduce the amount of salt and even leave it out completely. For tomatoes, vegetables, meats and poultry, any added salt is only for seasoning. Adding salt to food when canning is not necessary to ensure its safety. Now, if you are making sauerkraut or fermented brine pickles, the salt level is very important for food safety. In fermented foods, salt favors the growth of desirable bacteria while inhibiting the growth of others. You can find more information at the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP) website, nchfp.uga.edu .

I've noticed that the percentage strength on vinegar can vary. Some labels say 5%, some say 4% or even lower. Does this matter when canning food?

All tested recipes from USDA use standard 5% acid strength vinegar to determine the processing time. This includes pickled vegetables, barbeque sauce, as well as canned tomatoes as an acidifier. The role of vinegar is to lower the pH (measure of acidity) to a safe level to inhibit the survival and growth of pathogenic bacteria. Using diluted vinegar of 4% acidity or lower can create an unsafe canned product.

I have been having trouble getting pressure to build in my pressure canner. It can sometimes take almost an hour. What might be the cause?

My first question is always what type of pressure canner someone has – dial gauge or a weighted gauge. The weighted gauge will always be correct, but the dial gauge should be tested every year for accuracy. If steam is visibly escaping out the side of the pot, this may indicate the gasket needs replaced. The next thing I ask is whether the canner has been vented with a full plume of steam for 10 minutes before putting the weight on. This allows all the air to be driven out, which could act as an insulator. Finally, check that the water level is 2 to 3 inches deep. With too little water, there is a chance the canner could run dry. With too much water, there will not be enough steam to raise the temperature and pressure high enough.

I hope to see you at the Bakersville Market this Friday, September 5 from 6:00 – 7:30 PM. I will test pressure canner dial gauges. This is free and all you need to bring is the lid to your canner. I will bring fact sheets and recipes from OSU Extension and will answer any questions you have about food preservation.

And now let's see what else is new from OSU Extension.

If you'd like more ideas for using Ohio produce, check out our Summer Webinar Series. The final free webinar will be September 9 at noon about squash and pumpkins. Register for the links at go.osu.edu/fpwebinars .

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and empower our families, individuals, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265, check us out on Facebook, or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!