

A Bean Puzzle

Dear Aunt Daisy,

For years, I have used the same method of preserving runner-beans with salt. This year, however, although the salt becomes dampish, it simply won't dissolve, or make the brine as in previous years.

"Putaruru."

I think you need not worry about the brine not forming—so long as you have a good thick layer of salt packed down hard on the top, and not a single bean showing through. Perhaps the salt was lumpy. Anyhow, just pack the top well; and here are two letters from the Daisy Chain who are anxious to help a fellow-Link.

"Kumeu" writes: "I have a two-gallon crock which I filled this year with 30lb. beans. First of all I put a layer of salt on the bottom of the crock and then go on from there. I cut up a glass bowl of beans and sprinkle them with salt and work them about until I get the juice out of the beans. Then I put a handful of beans in the crock and a handful of salt and then pour the juice that has formed over the beans. I have found that more than sufficient juice forms to cover the beans. Of course I did not do the 30lb. all at once; it took me 3 weeks to do them, and in the meantime the beans that were already in the crock were floating round in the juice. I did not have to pack the beans tightly. When the crock is full of beans and salt I always put an extra thick layer of salt over the top of the beans and wait until the juice comes through the salt; then commence to make them airtight by putting one thickness of brown paper each day for a week over the mouth of the crock. It makes them perfectly airtight and they will keep for years. I really think that your lady has started off her beans with too much salt. I used only 13lb. of salt for 30lb. beans! I have done beans like this for over 20 years."

"Petone-ite" writes: "You have just been talking of the listener who was worried about the salt not dissolving in her beans. This is how I have done mine for 10 years. Cut up beans fairly fine into a basin, rub in some salt and pack into a stone jar. When I've finished that day's lot, I cover well with salt. I never weigh the beans or the salt, and never have I had a failure. Not all the salt dissolves, but my beans are always delicious, and cannot be distinguished from fresh beans. I wash well in cold water, cover with cold water and bring to boil; then drain and cover again with cold water; if too salty, drain and cover with cold water a third time, and then finish cooking."

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