



SUMMER PRESERVING TIME

The Art Of Bottling Fruit

MODERN methods of preserving have made the process much easier than it used to be. A very popular way nowadays is to do the bottling in the oven. The process is really very easy, and furthermore, you can do small quantities at a time, and really hardly notice it as any extra work at all. Put a few bottles in the oven after cooking the dinner, thus using the remaining heat.

Preparing the Materials

(1) The fruit must be clean, unbruised, and not over-ripe—as perfect as possible.

(2) The jars must be clean, and sterilised in the oven, or by putting them into a pan of cold water and bringing them to the boil. Leave them in the water, taking them out one by one to fill with the fruit.

(3) The rubber rings must be new every season, and must also be sterilised in boiling water.

(4) Treacle tins or jars without screw tops may be used quite well, provided they are properly clean and are sterilised before using. For tins, hammer the lids down tightly after flooding the cooked fruit with boiling water or syrup, and then pour melted paraffin wax all over the top, so that the seal may be complete. For open glass jars, pour the wax over the cooked fruit to a depth of about half an inch, and when cold, paste parchment or greaseproof paper over them.

(5) *The Syrup.* Use thin syrup for mild sweet fruits, and medium syrup for tart fruits. Heavy syrup is used with very acid fruits. Fruits that are to be used for pies may be bottled in boiling water instead of syrup.

(6) The oven needs to be very slow, and the heat can be lessened after the first half hour. Fruit, when done, is usually just beginning to break the skin. Put the jars on the lowest shelf, and be sure that they do not nearly touch each other, or the sides of the oven.

The Process

Place the prepared fruit in the hot jars, and shake and tap them so that the fruit may settle tightly down. Use a folded cloth to stand the jars upon. Pour boiling syrup over the fruit to within an inch of the top of the jar; water may be used instead of syrup, but each must be boiling. Dip a knife in boiling water and run it round the sides of the jar, to remove the air bubbles. Then fit on the rubber rings, and place the screw tops on loosely.

Put the filled jars in the oven and heat for the length of time necessary to cook the fruit. Remove from the oven one at a time and stand them on a

Keeping Food Cool

Fill a box with damp sand and place the food in a biscuit tin in the middle of it. The sand must be kept damp. This is nearly as good as an ice-box, and cheaper!

folded cloth while you screw the lids down very firmly indeed. Stand the jars upside down for some hours to make sure that the sealing is perfect. Never stand them in a cold draught, or they may crack. Never try to tighten the screw tops again when cool.

Black or Red Currants

Make the syrup with a pound of sugar to a pint of water, and boil for five to ten minutes. Pack the bottles, pour in the boiling syrup to within an inch of the top, fix on the rubber rings, and the screw top just loosely, as described above, and heat for one hour in a very slow oven. Finish as per detailed instructions.

Cherries

(Special Method)

Make a syrup of quarter of a pound of sugar to a pint of water. Heat the cherries and syrup in a saucepan, and bring to the boil slowly. Allow the cherries to remain in this syrup overnight. Next day put the fruit in clean hot jars; boil up the syrup and fill the jars to within an inch of the top and heat in the oven for thirty minutes on low heat. Finish as usual. This special method removes any possibility of the cherries being hard, but they can also be done in the ordinary way, without being left overnight.

Gooseberries require a syrup made with half a pound of sugar to a pint of water. Then proceed as usual. Heat in the oven for thirty minutes.

Pears and Plums

Have pears firm—rather hard is really best. Pare, cut into halves, and remove the cores. Heat the prepared fruit in a saucepan with a syrup of quarter of a pound of sugar to a pint of water and bring slowly to the boil. Pack the fruit into the hot jars, pour the syrup over and proceed as usual, keeping in the oven for forty-five minutes.

Plums are done exactly the same, but of course, without cutting or skinning.

Peaches and Apricots

Have peaches not too ripe. Place them in boiling water for a few seconds, to loosen the skin, as one does with tomatoes. Skin them, cut into halves, and remove the stones. Proceed in the

manner already described, making the syrup with half a pound of sugar to a pint of water. Heat in a slow oven for one hour, and seal in the usual way.

Apricots are done the same way, but without skinning.

Raspberries and Loganberries

Make a syrup with one pound of sugar to a pint of water. Put the berries into this, in a saucepan, and simmer gently for five minutes. Then pack the fruit into hot jars, pour the boiling syrup over, proceed as usual, leaving them in the very slow oven for 35 minutes.

Strawberries

These must be done very carefully, or the fruit will shrink, lose colour, and rise in the bottles. Cover the strawberries with a cool syrup, made if possible by stewing raspberries or loganberries in a syrup, so that it is a beautiful colour. The syrup is made with a pint of water to every pound of sugar. Bring the strawberries slowly to the boil in a saucepan in this strained and cooled syrup, then take off the fire and leave them standing till next day. Then pour off the syrup and pack the strawberries carefully into the hot jars. Boil up the syrup and pour it over the berries. Heat in the very slow oven as usual, for thirty-five minutes, and seal. Strawberries are better if bottled in small jars.

Two Fruits Together

This sometimes improves the colour of the preserve—as when red cherries are mixed with green gooseberries. Make your syrup with one pound of sugar to a pint of water. Into this put first the fruit which takes the longest time, adding the other after five or ten minutes as the case may be. Cook until the fruit is tender, but not broken. Then ladle into the hot jars and proceed as usual cooking for twenty minutes or so. If one of the fruits has been added in a raw state, sterilise in the oven for as long as it would take if alone—say gooseberries, thirty minutes.

Quick Method of Bottling Fruit

This is an old way of bottling fruit, and the simplest of all. It may not be quite so safe, as regards keeping for a long time, but it was formerly in general use and considered quite satisfactory.

Allow half a pint of water and quarter of a pound of sugar to every pound of fruit. Make a syrup of the sugar and water, and let it boil for five or ten minutes. Then put the fruit in, and simmer gently till quite soft. Have ready the jars, which must be airtight stand on a damp cloth, put in a little syrup, then fill up the jar with fruit, cover with the syrup, and pass a knife round the inside to allow the air bubbles to escape. Close down, and keep in a cool place until wanted. Peaches, pears, and quinces should be peeled, and the cores boiled in a piece of butter muslin in the syrup.

FROM THE MAIL BAG

Country Woman's Problems

Dear Aunt Daisy,

Once again I have a packet of problems which I hope you or the Daisy Chain can solve for me.

First: I should like recipes for summer drinks in the style of lemonades and ginger ale, but the recipes must contain very little or no sugar. Second: For how long can cereals—rice, sago, macaroni, semolina, flour, etc., be stored, and what is the best method of doing it? Third: I should like to know a reliable way of storing onions, carrots, and cabbages for winter use. Also a reliable recipe for dried apples. Fourth: Our water supply comes from a well, and colours any white article rather brownish after several washings. The water contains lots of iron and sediment. What is the best way of keeping things white, especially white woollies?

I am not a clever and seasoned housewife, and cannot give you hints for exchange. Thanking you very much, in advance for your reply and trouble.—
Te Rapa.

Well now, let us begin at the end, and take the water problem first. I think the real remedy would be to send a sample of the water to the Health Department in Wellington, and ask their advice. They would analyse the water, and find out what causes the discoloration; and suggest the proper thing to counteract it. Of course, they give the service free. In the meantime, I would tie several thicknesses of buttercloth loosely over the tap, so that the sediment, at any rate, will be strained out. For the white clothes, an old-fashioned custom was to add a tablespoon of turpentine to the copper full of water; or a little kerosene. Still older is the idea of dissolving a little pipe-clay in the water, and this was very highly thought of. Borax would be good for the woollies, or a little ammonia. Probably somebody who has a similar difficulty with water will send in a helping hint.

For storing the vegetables, I consulted a very well known nursery gardener. He said that the way to store onions is to "string them" (whole, of course), and hang the strings up, round and round the kitchen or a dry shed, so that the air can circulate round the onions, and they are not touching each other or anything else. For carrots, he said to screw off the tops, and dig a hole in the ground, covering them over with earth. I asked him if worms would not spoil them, but he said that a little lime mixed with the soil would keep the worms away. Being farmers, you will probably understand about that. Cabbages and green vegetables, he said, can only be kept in cold storage, so that

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