ASK Aunt Daisy

PRESERVING WITHOUT TEARS

PERHAPS you have kept last year's page on preserving (January, 1951). That answers most of your questions. The best thing you can do is to get the book on preserving from the Home Science Extension of the Otago University. That tells everything. I am not a believer in preserving fruit by simply pouring boiling water on it and sealing it airtight. I know that many people do have success with gooseberries and some very sour plums by this method, but I believe in processing all fruits. This is to stop the growth of those substances in all fresh fruits and vegetables which cause their normal ripening. They are called enzymes. If they go on working after fruit is ripe, it decays. So they must be checked. Also moulds and yeasts must be killed—this is done at boiling point for the correct length of time. Bacteria are much harder to kill, especially in non-acid foods, like peas, beans, corn, meat or poultry or fish. They can be boiled for 6 hours and even then can wake up quite happily and cause poisoning. Therefore you can not preserve non-acid foods in the oven. It is safer not to preserve any non-acid foods except by pressure-cooking, when you can have 10 lb. of pressure. Even then most of these foods take at least an hour in quart jars, corn takes 85 minutes, peas 40 minutes, broad beans 55 minutes, runner beans 25 minutes. In a hot-water bath it is safe to give all the jars 3 hours. And, as a precaution, all non-acid foods preserved at boiling temperature should be boiled 15 minutes before using, or even tasting.

Easy Fruit Preserving

Pack unblemished fruit into jars, cover with cold syrup or water leaving ½ inch space at top to allow for expansion, fit seal on tightly and properly, and place jars in waterbath, with cold water to cover about an inch over the top. Bring slowly to simmering point taking 1½ hours to do so. It is this slow heating which ensures all moulds, etc., being killed throughout the whole contents of the jars and at the same time keeps the fruit in good shape and colour. Simmering point is 165 degrees, or when small bubbles rise from the bottom of the water-bath to the surface. Large bubbles break violently on the surface when the water is boiling. Keep at simmering point for 15 minutes for most fruits, but 30 minutes for tomatoes, pears, oranges and bananas. Then remove the jars and stand on a wooden surface or on folded cloths or newspapers, out of a draught. Do not allow the jars to cool in the water or the product will be overcooked or otherwise spoilt.

Vacuum Method

It is always safe to follow the manufacturer's directions on the seal lids. Fill heated jar with fruit and boiling syrup, leaving ½ inch space at top. Put on insert seal (or replacement lid), and screw down outer screw-band quite tight. Put into hot water bath, bring to boiling point and then count correct time. Remove and leave standing upright 24 hours before removing screw-band, which should have been lightly greased. If insert lid is tight and firm, seal is complete. If lid loose, fit on screw-band again and re-sterilise.

Stewing Method

Make a syrup by boiling sugar and water 5-10 minutes. Put in the prepared fruit and simmer slowly till tender. Fill clean, hot, sterilised jars to overflowing with fruit and syrup, run a knife round the inside quickly to work out air-bubbles and seal tightly *immediately*, while still boiling, *doing one jar at a time.*

Syrup

Cane and beet sugar are equally good for syrup. Brown sugar may carry bacteria and is not recommended for preserving. Honey may replace sugar, in the same proportion; or use half sugar and half honey. Thin syrup is best for small sweet fruits like berries, 1 part sugar to 3 parts water. Medium syrup (2 parts water to one of sugar) is the usual syrup used. Heavy syrup for large sour fruits is made with equal parts sugar and water.

Water Only

Fruit can be bottled perfectly in water alone, and sweetening added when using. Or you may use water, but just put a tablespoonful of sugar or honey on the top of the fruit before putting on the seal.

In the Oven

This is very useful for doing a few jars at a time. Fruit and tomatoes are done this way, but never vegetables. You fit on seals before putting jars in the oven. Cover lightly with old tin lids or patty pans, and when cooked fill up (one at a time) with boiling syrup or water, then put on the insert lid and screw band immediately, as by the stewing method. Have the oven very slow (regulo 1 or 250 degrees). Leave ¾ to 1 hour, except pears and tomatoes, which need ½ hour longer. If you find fruit has shrunk, fill jars from one of the others and set back in oven 10 minutes or so before taking out and filling up with boiling water or syrup, which should be ready and boiling on top of the stove. Seal immediately as described above.

FROM THE MAILBAG

Fluff on Oak Table

Dear Aunt Daisy,

Can you tell me if it is possible to clean the top of a polished oak table that has been ironed on? There are no marks, but although several thicknesses separated the iron from the table, the underneath one has stuck and left white fluff. This has been there some time and almost the whole of the table is affected.

"A Regular Listener," Ohakune.

The only thing I can suggest is to first rub the table over with a soft cloth moistened with cold tea or metal polish. This should remove the fluff. Then rub in warm camphorated oil, a little every day, and polish up with a soft cloth. Any good furniture polish would be appropriate, too. Use a little each day until the table is all right again. Work with the grain of the wood, not against it.