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AUNT DAISY'S MAIL-BAG

MY DEAR Daisy Chain, the first letter in the Mail Bag this week must be one from me to you! Not exactly a letter, but just some simple directions about bottling and preserving, because I have received so many requests for them.

I think peas seem to be the most difficult vegetable to keep; and I am convinced that they need at least three hours' sterilising. In very hot countries such as South Africa, it is usual to take two or three days over this process of bottling peas, and I will give the method below. The idea is that the boiling on the first day kills all the organisms; and that the second day's boiling kills the seeds or spores which have had time to develop during the interval. As a matter of fact, a certain kind of bacteria does develop after sterilising if the temperature has not exceeded 212 degrees (or boiling point), which is the reason that big canning firms use steam pressure cookers for non-acid vegetables—that is, all vegetables except beetroot and tomatoes.

In New Zealand, however, most people have very fair success by sterilising in the ordinary way, either in the copper (using a trellised framework or stand at the bottom, on which to stand the bottles, instead of on pieces of rag or straw as used to be done), or in the gas or electric ovens; but peas need at least three hours.

In South Africa

Here is the South African method of preserving green peas, which is suitable for use in any hot climate:

Select tender peas, shell them, then cook for five minutes in boiling water (if tied in a piece of butter-muslin or cheese-cloth they are easy to lift out). Plunge into cold water, then pack them into jars, and fill up with water, to which one teaspoon of sugar has been added to every pint, and half that quantity of salt; although salt, having a tendency to harden, is better omitted, especially if peas are not very young. Adjust the rubbers and screw down the lids loosely, or in the case of spring-top jars, adjust the wire clamp, but do not fasten down. Pack the jars in the boiler and sterilise for one hour. Tighten the covers of jars and leave to cool, in the boiler, for 24 hours. The following day, sterilise for one hour,

carefully into sterilised jars, fill up with cold boiled water, slightly salted, cover lightly with the lid, and put them into the boiler as if sterilising fruit. The water need not come far up the jars; but the steam must be kept in by a lid and probably also some clean sacking placed over that. If you are not sure of keeping all the steam in, it is safer to have enough water in the boiler to cover the tops of the jars for about an inch. Then bring the water to the boil, and count the required time for sterilisation from then. When finished, overflow with boiling water, adjust the sterilised rings, and screw down at once. Invert the jars for some hours, to make sure the sealing is perfect.

Times For Sterilising

FRENCH BEANS:—Blanch for 5 to 10 minutes, according to size; cold-dip for nearly a minute; sterilise for 3 hours. Add a little sugar as well as salt to the water.

PEAS:—Grade them so that each bottle holds equal-sized peas. Blanch for 10 minutes; cold-dip for nearly a minute and sterilise at least 3 hours. Add sugar to the water in which they are preserved; also mint, if liked. A little borax, too, will help to preserve the green colour.

TOMATOES:—If the skins are to be removed, blanch them for 2 minutes, then cold-dip for half a minute and peel or rub off skins. If they are not to be peeled, there is no need for blanching. Pack into jars; put in just a little cold boiled water (salted a little or not, as desired), and sterilise for 10 minutes. Then overflow with boiling water and seal.

BROAD BEANS:—Shell them and grade them for size. Blanch for 10 minutes; cold-dip for nearly a minute; pack into jars, fill with slightly salted water, and sterilise for 3 hours.

MUSHROOMS:—For preference choose the button mushrooms. Peel and blanch for 5 minutes; cold-dip for a few seconds, pack into jars, fill with slightly salted water; and sterilise for 1½ hours.

BEETROOT:—Grade the beet-roots for size. Three-parts cook them, then cold-dip, rub off the skins, pack in jars and fill with water. Sterilise for 1 hour. Or, instead of filling the jars with water, use a mixture made by boiling together 1½ pints of water, ½ pint of vinegar, 1 oz. of salt and 2 oz. sugar.

SPINACH, SILVER BEET, OR TURNIP TOPS:—Wash in several changes of water. Instead of blanching in boiling water, these vegetables should be steamed in a steamer or colander for about 15 minutes. This results in less waste of mineral matter, and retains the green colour. When done, pack in the jars solidly like pulp; and without adding any liquid, sterilise for 2 hours. Then quickly put on rubbers and screw the lids down.

ASPARAGUS:—Clean it well and grade the stalks for size. Tie them up in bundles and blanch the bottom ends in the boiling water for 15 minutes; then immerse the whole bunch for another 5 minutes. The delicate tips will not need any longer. Cold-dip for half a minute. Separate the stalks and pack carefully into the jars, being careful not to break the tender tops. Fill up with slightly salted water and sterilise for 3 hours.

CARROTS:—Choose bright red ones. Scrub clean and half-cook in slightly salted water. Rub off the skins with a piece of coarse muslin and pack into jars either whole or in strips or rings. Use slightly salted water as a covering, with a little sugar; and sterilise for 1½ to 2 hours.

PARSNIPS:—Do these like carrots. They can also be mixed, packing them in alternate rows, cut in rings or in strips.

Next week I will give the length of time for sterilising fruits. And

now, may I sign myself, "The Clasp of the Daisy Chain"?—Aunt Daisy."

Nasty Discovery!

Dear Aunt Daisy,—May I take this opportunity of expressing to you my deep appreciation of your very helpful morning sessions. I rarely miss one; as a matter of fact, the time spent by the wireless is tremendous, but not wasted by any means. And now, I was wondering if you, by any chance, know how to get rid of ants and cockroaches, both of which I have in



the safe; and believe me, it's just awful when you get to the bottom of the milk-jug and discover a horrible cockroach!—E.G. (Te Aroha.)

I heartily agree with you! I remember once finding a little mouse at the bottom of my milk-jug! Fortunately, I had seen his long silky tail draped over the edge of the jug, so hadn't put any of the milk in my tea. But a cockroach hasn't a tail, has he?

I do know of a perfectly sure and safe product for killing cockroaches; and also of one for ants, which I really think are just as bad. Both these are guaranteed by the makers, and are, moreover, quite safe to use where pets are kept—(including children)—for they are non-poisonous except to the ants, and the cockroaches. The same firm makes the "cure" for borer, and moths and silverfish, to which I referred lately. I will gladly send you the names of the different "cures" if you send me a stamped addressed envelope. This firm makes a special destroyer for every pest—even one for rats and mice which is quite safe to put down in a fowl-run where rats come and steal the eggs; because each destroyer kills only the pest for which it is designed.

Salad Days

Here's a nice little verse, which was sent us from Takapuna.

Dear Aunt Daisy,—I thought this might do for a corner in your Daisy Chain page in the "Radio Record":
When days are close and thundery,
And no one looks at food,
She raids the kitchen garden plots
For something fresh and good.
And picking here, and pulling there,
She carries in the whole,
And leaving them below the tap,
Brings out her salad bowl.
She tears up tender lettucees,
She scatters in some cress,
She sticks round tiny onions,
To flavour, more or less.
She dabs in scarlet radishes,
And peas quite new and sweet,
And there she has a something
Fit for every one to eat.

Stove Polish

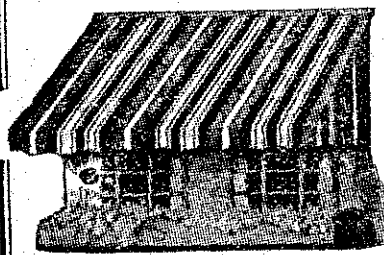
Dear Aunt Daisy,—Some time ago, I think you gave over the air something to polish a black range with. It wasn't a bought polish, but something you make at home. I wonder, Aunt Daisy, if you would put it in the "Radio Record." I would like to use it, as the other polishes make such a mess.—Mrs. J. (Pahautanui.)

Well, here are three, all of which I have given at different times. I think that the first may be the one you mean. Mix together and use in the usual way, four packets of black lead, or one tin of stove paste, one cup of turpentine, and three table-spoons of furniture wax or floor polish. This will not burn off and gives a lasting polish.

No. 2. One heaped tablespoon of lino polish, 1 tin of paste and about one cup of turpentine. Mix these to a cream, and apply it to a cool stove. A little goes a long way, and there is no dust; also the stove keeps clean a long while. The mixture is best kept in a flat and wide tin which is air-tight.

No. 3. Two cups of turpentine, 1 tablespoon of Jeyes fluid, two cakes of blacklead, and 1 dessertspoon of washing soda. Pound up the soda, and put them all into a bottle, and leave them overnight to stand. In the morning, shake it up well.

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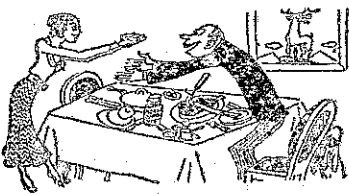
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taking care to loosen the lids in order to let out the steam, otherwise jars might crack. Repeat the process the third day, screw down the lids tightly or fasten down the clamps of spring-top jars, and put away in a dry, cool place.

If preferred, peas may be sterilised for two hours the first day and repeated the second day, instead of one hour for three days.

General Method

Here is the general method for preserving vegetables:

Have the vegetables fresh, young and unbruised. Wash them and prepare in the usual way. Blanch them by plunging them into boiling water for the required time—see directions below—then lift them out and plunge immediately into very cold water for about a minute. If the vegetables are put into a piece of butter-muslin, they are more easily plunged in and lifted out. At once, pack them