



## Canning complex; try freezing instead

**This year I was tempted to start home canning to try to stretch my garden harvest into the fall and winter. But whenever I read about canning, it seems very complicated. Any advice?**

If you don't have experience with home canning, you're right — it can be a complex process. And it's vital to know what you're doing. At the very least, improperly home-canned food can spoil, which would completely undermine your hard work. At the worst, improperly canned food could allow the growth of the bacteria that causes botulism. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cases of food-borne botulism are usually caused by eating contaminated home-canned foods.

Still, if you decide to take the plunge, consider taking a self-study course, "Preserving Food at Home: A Self-Study," offered for free by the National Center for Home Food Preservation. The course consists of four lessons, "Introduction to Food Preservation," "General Canning," "Canning Acid Foods" and "Canning Low-Acid Foods." You can register for the course on the center's Web site, <http://www.homefoodpreservation.com>. Or, you may want to browse the Web site for detailed information on canning and other methods of preservation.

However, you might want to consider freezing summer produce instead of canning it. First, it can be more economical, especially if you don't have the equipment and supplies necessary for home canning. Second, it's a much simpler process than canning. In most cases, you just have to wash and blanch the fresh vegetables before putting them into a container; in some cases -- peppers, for example, you don't even have to blanch them.

Again, the home food preservation center's Web site offers detailed information on home freezing of foods. Some tips:

- Freeze foods at 0 degrees F or lower. For better quality, set your freezer at minus 10 degrees F the day before so your food freezes more rapidly.
- Don't prepare so much food that you overload your freezer with room-temperature foods. The general rule is to do just two to three pounds of food per cubic foot of storage space. So, if your freezer is 7 cubic feet, don't try freezing more than 21 pounds of food at once.
- When freezing large amounts of food at once, place containers loosely in the freezer so air can circulate around them. Once frozen, the packages can be stacked closely together.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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