



Live Farm Fresh Without the Farm™

Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 46 The Top 3 Canning Myths and How to Avoid Them

Show Notes: www.LivingHomegrown.com/46

This is the Living Homegrown Podcast, episode #46.

Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast, where it's all about how to live farm fresh, without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, national PBS TV producer and canning expert Theresa Loe.

Theresa: Hey there everyone! Welcome to the Living Homegrown podcast. I'm your host Theresa Le. This podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without a farm which just means that we talk about how to have a more flavorful, organic lifestyle even if you don't have a lot of space. And we do that by talking about artisan food crafts like canning and fermenting, growing your own organic food and just ways to live a more seasonal, sustainable lifestyle. If you want to learn more about any of these topics or my online can and courses just visit my website LivingHomegrown.com

This week's topic is the top three myths about canning and how to avoid them. And I chose this topic because if you are following me at all or you're a regular listener than you know I'm all gearing up here for the opening of the doors of the Canning Academy. And I only open the doors a few times a year and this is the Spring session which is perfectly timed so that you can get ready for canning the harvest before the canning season really hits its peak in just a few short months.



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And I find that when I teach about canning or I give lectures on living farm fresh without the farm and when I get to diving into the preserving part of that lecture that there is several misconceptions that people have about canning. So in today's episode I wanted to spell some of those misconceptions right here.

And I totally understand where these misconceptions come from because when most people think of canning or putting up the harvest they either remember back to when their parents or their grandparents were canning food and it was like this big major ordeal. And I mean like major ordeal and sometimes people just think whoah, canning is so much work. And that's one way that people look at it. Or sometimes they've never even seen canning or done it at all or watched anyone can and so they've only seen pictures or read about it. And it just sounds really complicated or even scary. So in today's topic I want to address some of those most common myths.

And the reason I want to address these is because they truly are myths. Things are really different today than they were for our parents or grandparents. And more importantly I don't want these misconceptions to hold you back. I don't want anything to get in your way of living a more flavorful or sustainable lifestyle and knowing how to preserve food can play a really big part in that. And for me it's all about flavor and the fun of crafting artisan preserves and I don't want you to miss out on that. So let's just dive right in.

Myth number one is that canning is too expensive and this is sometimes one of the first things that hold people back because when they think of canning food they think you need a lot of expensive or fancy equipment. And that is really only true if you are going to start by diving into advanced canning which is pressure canning.

You see in the canning world when you're canning food you are taking food and prepping it and putting it inside of a canning jar and then you're going to be processing it in some way in order to get it to store on the pantry shelf. What we're doing is we are creating a vacuum seal in that jar. And



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there are mainly two different ways that you would typically do that. One is with water bath canning and that's where you are processing the jar in boiling water. And the other way is to process the jar in a pressure canner. Now a pressure canner is a more expensive piece of equipment. It's that big tall pot with the fancy big metal lid and it has knobs and it has a pressure gauge on it and it actually looks very scary and very intimidating.

Well pressure canning is really a more advanced type of canning. If you have never canned before then you should stick with water bath canning which is just using a stock pot. It's very simple, you probably already have everything in your kitchen to get started. And you can can a lot of food when you stick with the water bath canning method.

And the difference between the two has to do with pH levels and that's a whole more complicated topic that I'll be getting into in another podcast. But just know that if you want to dive into water bath canning you can make jams, jellies, fruit preserves, marmalade, pickles and acidified tomatoes. And that's a pretty wide margin of things that you can can in a water bath canner.

And really when I say canner I'm making quote marks in the air you can't you can't see that can you tell him doing quote marks but I am I'm doing quote marks. But a water bath canner is really just a tall stock pot with a rack in the bottom. And that rack is to hold the jars up off the bottom so they don't get too hot by coming in contact with the heat source of your stove. And that's really all that a canner is.

So if you have it all stock pot in your kitchen already then you're half the way there and all you need is some sort of a rack to put at the bottom. And that could be a round cake or cookie rack, a cooling rack that you would place your cookies on to let them cool after they come out of the oven something like that. Or a trivet, a metal trivet would work. I don't recommend using plastic because you are going to be boiling water on the stove for a long of time and you don't want that to melt which a plastic trivet might melt. Or you could invest in a canner they're usually under \$20 for a



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smaller can you don't need to buy a big ginormous one if you're just starting out. And that's all it is it all stock pot with a rack at the bottom.

Then after that really all you need are your canning jars. That would be your biggest investment and canning jars you use over and over and over you can have them for a lifetime if you take care of them so you only make that investment once.

And then the other thing that I would get which makes it a whole lot easier is what's called a jar lifter. And it's just a tool that is used for lifting the jars in and out of the boiling water. But you know what? If you don't have a jar lifter you probably have tongs. long-handled tongs in your kitchen and if you wrap those with heavy-duty rubber band then you have just created your own jar lifter. It's not perfect but it works pretty darn well for lifting those jars in and out of the water. It only becomes cumbersome if you're lifting out really large jars because they're so heavy for that I would want to use a jar lifter see don't drop the jar. But for smaller jars like pint size jars or half pints you could totally get away with using a long-handled tong that's wrap with rubber bands. And it would give you a way to dive into canning in a really simple way to test it out and make sure that you love it.

And now once you have the basics of water bath canning under your belt you can always drive a little bit deeper and take things to the next level. And there are a few other really simple tools you could always add to your equipment list to do that and I go deep into that within the Canning Academy. But you can get started right away with nothing more than a stock pot, rack, some sort of jar lifter and a set of canning jars. So it's easy peasy to get started.

Alright so that brings myth number two which is people worry that canning is very complicated. Now I can see why people think that because they usually think of pressure canning and that really complicated pressure canner with all the knobs and bells and whistles and they think oh man that looks really, really complicated.



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But if you are going to stay in the water bath canning area which is a great entry-level place to start with canning you don't have to go into the more advanced canning of pressure canning and you don't need that equipment. And for that reason I really feel that water bath canning is just as easy as any simple cooking. But hey I have to be totally honest here canning can be complicated if you pick a really complicated recipe.

So think of it this way. If canning is like cooking you can pick a complicated recipe and cooking right you could pick something really decadent like chocolate soufflé. I know it sounds very complicated recipe if you have never cooked before or if you're just starting to learn how to cook and you want to make some delicious dessert. You can pick something simple but still delicious like a baked apple and in a baked apple recipe you are learning how to make that apple with just a little bit of cinnamon maybe some spices so that you're letting the flavor of the apple shine through without any special techniques right?

Well that's the same way that it is with water bath canning. You can pick a very complicated recipe or you can pick a very simple and delicious recipe. So there's definitely ways to start and build up to something more complicated but to take this cooking analogy even further what I don't want to see you do is that you feel that you have to swing completely the other way and think that you have to open a box of instant mac and cheese.

In other words I don't want you to feel like you have to buy a flavorless high sugar jam or jelly in the supermarket because you don't know how to make these things yourself. To me grabbing that jar of high sugar flavorless jam in the supermarket is the same as grabbing that instant mac and cheese box off the shelf. And we all know that that is not the most flavorful choice or even the most healthy choice for your family.

And it's the same with those preserves that are in the store. So instead I want you to feel like you can dive into a simple yet delicious canned food recipe and still tackle it confidently. And all you need to do to accomplish this is to choose your recipes wisely. So you start with something in water



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bath canning and you go for recipes that use less chopping and less prep work.

You go for real simple recipes like maybe start with a jam recipe and you choose produce that is in season and at its peak flavor so that you have the best success. So doing those steps will give you a really good feeling about canning and it'll make you want to dive in even further.

And if you can follow a simple recipe to cook a simple meal then you can totally preserve food. In fact if you can read a recipe off the back of that mac and cheese box, then you can preserve food. You just need a little bit of guidance to get started and then you can build up really quickly to the more advanced recipes and more advanced artisan preserves.

Okay myth number 3 is that canning is a marathon. Now I get this one a lot because it all harks back to what our parents or our grandparents did when they were canning food. Because back then people were canning food for one reason they were stocking up! And the main goal was to have food on the pantry shelf for the next year. So they would can really large batches of food. It was an all-day thing. It was hot sweaty work in the middle of summer. It was not fun. They weren't doing it for fun.

So I think that gives people the impression that that's what canning is all about. Well canning to stock up or canning food to stock up your pantry is not the only reason to preserve food. I preserve food to capture flavor. And I do that to create artisan preserves that you can't find anywhere else. Flavor is my main goal. Not stocking up for the apocalypse okay! The act of creating that food is like this creative outlet for me. I just really love it. And the fact that I'm also getting the stock of my pantry at the same time well I mean that's just an added bonus.

Although that wasn't my initial goal and to really diving into canning food as an adult that is an added bonus for me when I am preserving the harvest. I have food that was preserved in the summer that I can enjoy in the winter when the season is over. And that's just extra icing on the cake for me.



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So what you can do to avoid this marathon feeling when you want to preserve food is to do what I outlined in myth number two which is to pick simple recipes. But you can also make smaller recipes. You don't have to can up 15 jars at a time. You can do smaller artisan batches if you want to.

And by sticking with smaller batches you can try all different types of preserves and you'll just have a few jars of each type on your pantry shelf instead of 15 jars of strawberry jam that you may never get through in a year. And once you get a few of the smaller batches under your belt you can tackle larger recipes but just break them up into smaller chunks so that it's not this big long time-consuming marathon that takes you all day.

Because let's face it we don't have that kind of time! I have two teenage boys, I'm a TV producer, I'm running my own business and I have a garden to tend to plus chickens so I do not have time to sit in my kitchen all day long to can up a batch of strawberry jam.

So I do all kinds of tricks of breaking things up, doing part of it the night before and then tackling the rest of the recipe the next morning. There's a lot of ways that you can break up recipes so that it's not one big marathon.

Alright? Okay so just to give you a little bit of a taste of what canning can be if you've never ever canned before I put together a free pdf that goes along with this episode. And it's a recipe for really simple blueberry refrigerator jam.

What is refrigerator jam? Well it's jam that is not canned. So what it is is a recipe that you create you don't even have to put it into a canning jar. You can put it into any type of container and store it in your refrigerator for several weeks. It's a small batch so you would eat it up within that time and it gives you all just a little bit of a taste of what it is to make fresh jam.

You'll get to see how easy it is how delicious it is and how easy it is. Then if you want to dive in deeper, I'm your gal and I can show you how! I know it's not blueberry season and you know me I'm all about eating food in season so this particular recipe can be made with frozen blueberries. So



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when blueberries are frozen for the store they are frozen at their peak in season, you can even get organic blueberries and it just takes some frozen blueberries and about 20 minutes of your time and it's one of the easiest preserve recipes I know. It will give you instant success and I hope it'll make you want to learn all the rest so that you'll want to make this type of jam and start on the pantry shelf for a year.

And once you learn how to make jam and stored on the shelf then you can make all sorts of preserves with seasonal produce that you can enjoy later when that produce is out of season.

Now if you want this recipe all you have to do is go to the show notes for this episode it's at LivingHomeGrown.com/46 and you can download the recipe printed out and make it whenever you have 20 minutes to spare.

Also in last week's episode I talked about seasonal flavor and the benefits of capturing it from both a sustainability standpoint and from a flavorful lifestyle standpoint. But I also talked about how when you can or preserve your own food you're becoming part of that food story and you know where that food came from and you're putting your own creative spin on that food.

Well if you'd like to dive into seasonal food stories of your own here's your chance. Because at the end of this month I'm opening the doors to my Canning Academy and I only do this a few times a year. In the Canning Academy I take you from a complete rookie newbie canner to a seasoned canner so that you can preserve food confidently and safely using the water bath canning method.

But the course covers so much more than that. You learn all my secrets from my lifetime canning. Plus my triningin of both food preservation and cooking tips so you learn tips and tricks for getting the most flavor from your preserves. And I pull from my engineering background if you didn't know this I have an engineering degree I pull from my tech background to easily explain what's happening when you can food so understand enough to know what you can and cannot change and still be safe.



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If you want to learn more about the academy and be notified when I open the doors and just a few weeks you can go to the show notes for this episode at LivingHomegrown.com/46. Or if you're on your phone you can just text the letters canfood that's just all as one word, canfood to the number 44222.

I really hope you'll check it out. And at least go and download the blueberry refrigerator jam recipe. I think you'll love it. And I hope we can go on this flavourful journey together so that you will be completely ready before canning season hits its peak in just a few short months.

So that's it for this week! Until next time just keep working towards making those food choices that are local, seasonal and homegrown. See you next time!

Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown podcast. Visit LivingHomegrown.com to download Theresa's free canning resource guide and find more tips on how to live farm fresh, without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown podcast.