



All About Discovery!™

New Mexico State University

Lea County Cooperative Extension Service Lovington, New Mexico

Food Preservation

Robin C. Mack Haynes, Extension Home Economist

Situation

In a study by the National Center for Home Food Preservation in 2000, information collected revealed most Americans are canning vegetables, tomato-based products and fruits for home consumption. The study also found that Americans are using recipes that have been handed down generation to generation with modifications made to accommodate the families personal tastes. Other individuals who have taken up home canning, with no subject matter background, are looking to websites or blogs for recipes and information on how to can food at home. It is because of these type of resources some Americans are processing the food using their home oven, an open kettle method (no processing after filling the jar) or using a pressure cooker in place of a pressure canner to preserve their families foods.



Response

The Lea County Extension Service began providing Food Preservation Workshops, Demonstrations and General Information to 20 county residents. The workshops provided a hands on environment to adults and youth to learn USDA procedures in canning pickles, tomato based products (ie: salsa), jams or jellies, and fruits in syrup. For those who couldn't attend a day long workshop, a two-hour demonstration was provided, detailing USDA Home Canning Procedures in Water Bath, Pressure Canning, Dehydration and Freezing methods.



Six newspaper columns were published during the growing season in two county wide newspapers. Nearly 75 NMSU bulletins were distributed during the Lea County Fair to individuals interested in Food Preservation. Other information was provided as needed to county residents from recipes to general problem solving to testing pressure canners.



Impact

85% of adults who attend the workshops and preserved food at home have begun to use the correct equipment and procedures learned from extension service programs and

The majority of those attending a food preservation workshop or demonstration, now have up-to-date materials (ie. recipes) and access to safe food preservation recipes and procedures (ie National Center for Home Food Preservation and USDA websites).

95% of the youth who attended the food preservation workshop, entered their canning and dehydrated items in the Lea County Fair, thus increasing entries.

Pressure canner testing has been increasing with the newspaper columns and educational opportunities offered through the extension service.