

Preserve It: Canning Basics



Inventory Control

THE USDA RECOMMENDS CANNING FOR ONE YEAR. WHY?

We should all have an annual habit of checking our inventory of preserved foods. The USDA recommends we preserve enough food for one year. Why is one year recommended? Here are a few reasons:

- In one year, another crop will be available for preserving.
- Preserved foods using tested recipes and science-based methods will last many years. After a year (sometimes less, sometimes a bit more) the color of the product may fade. The top layer may oxidize and have an off color. It is still safe to eat, but not as visually appealing.
- Over time the nutritional value is reduced.
- The texture of some products can become soft and unpleasant.
- After a year flavors start to fade. Some herbs and spices can become bitter and make a product taste unpleasant. Or, some herbs can lose their flavor and then we are disappointed when we eat it.

Of course, this is not always the case. If a product looks good and the seal is intact, but is a few years old, open a jar and taste it. If it still tastes good, then by all means, keep it. But make an effort to use those older products sooner than later. Late winter or early spring is a good time to check your inventory. Eat the older products now or share with friends and family. Plan your preserving projects and your garden based on what is on hand already. If you still have another year's worth of tomato products in your inventory, you may decide to put off preserving them for another year. Remember to also check any dehydrated products you have in your pantry and the frozen products in your freezer.

Don't waste food and don't waste your time by preserving more than your family and friends can eat. There is always next season!

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