

Pressure Canning Without Fear  
By Ora Emmerich  
UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers  
For Print August 10, 2011

Pressure canning. Sounds ominous. Not the canning part. Everyone likes the canning part. It is the word “pressure” that puts a scare into people. Come to the free public education class offered this week by the Master Food Preservers and face the fear. Trained volunteers will answer questions about pressure canning and will demonstrate proper techniques for home canning of low acid foods.

No home food preserver wants to deal with botulism. This potent neurotoxin, produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*, causes paralysis of the muscles, leading to death if not treated promptly and aggressively by a physician. Botulism grows in low acid foods in an anaerobic environment when the food has not been processed correctly. Low acid foods must be processed at a temperature of 240° to 250°F for 20 to 100 minutes and this requires the use of a pressure canner. The time required for a particular food varies, so always use a chart from a reputable source and make sure to follow the instructions for proper timing.

The MFP volunteers have experience with all types of pressure canners. The volunteers will demonstrate how to properly vent a pressure canner (ten minutes for all types of pressure canners) and how to seal and pressurize the canners. Pressure canning requires a lot of time, so be sure to set aside plenty before beginning any session. In addition to the time used to get the product ready, the home canner must wait for the canner to get hot enough to begin the venting time, and must include the processing and cool-down time as well. In class demonstrations show the correct methods for all phases of pressure canning.

Home canners who live at higher altitudes must adjust many cooking practices, and preserving food using a pressure canner requires adjustments as well. Those living above 1000 feet must use an altitude adjustment chart for pressure canners, as the internal temperature of the unit must be high enough to insure food safety. Older pressure canners, and some newer models as well, may not be calibrated correctly. The Master Food Preservers offer a free pressure canner testing service. Call the office (number below) and leave a message and someone will return the call with more information about the service. Or bring your pressure canner to the class. Master Food Preservers will be available after the class to test your canner.

Questions about safe home food preservation? Call the Master Food Preservers and leave a message at (530) 621-5506. A Master Food Preserver will return the call. The Master Food Preservers are also available free of charge to speak to organizations and clubs about food safety or food preservation topics. Just call the number above to arrange for a speaker for small or large groups. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master\\_Food\\_Preservers/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/).