

Olives
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Fish-eye, foaming, softening and gas pockets...what do all of these have in common? These terms, used for various problems occurring during the preservation of olives, strike fear into the hearts of most home olive preservers. Not, however, that of Bernie Ritscher, Master Food Preserver for the University of Davis Extension in El Dorado County since 1985.

On October 18th, at 10:00 a.m. in the County Ag Building, Bernie shares his many years of expertise in home food preservation at a free public class titled "Olives". From which types of olives to pick to what container to use, Bernie and the other MFP volunteers explain exactly how to process olives safely at home.

Before the actual canning of the olives, the fruit must be debittered. This process involves the use of 100 % pure, granulated lye (NaOH), not Drano or any other product which contains metal pellets. Lye, extremely caustic, should never be left out to be touched by children, and great care must be taken when using the lye to avoid contact with human skin. Keep a solution of one cup vinegar to one cup water handy to rinse off the skin should contact occur.

Although a lengthy process, home preservation of olives should not prove difficult to accomplish. The class handout explains the processes and the MFP volunteers demonstrate the proper techniques. After successfully following the debittering process, the home food preserver may choose to can, brine, pickle, dry or freeze the tasty little olives. Each method leaves a slightly different product, depending on the preference of the preserver. Several of the procedures involve the use of salt, although some do not for those who are sensitive to the salt content of foods.

Clostridium botulinum, botulism, may be present in improperly canned olives. It is very important to follow the directions for canning precisely and to use a properly calibrated pressure canner. Olives require 60 minutes at 240°F (10 pounds pressure at sea level) in the pressure canner to ensure safety.

Get this information and much more at the public education class. Oh, and that fish-eye? Find out what causes it and how to prevent it...Bernie tells all on October 18th.

Do you have 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/.