

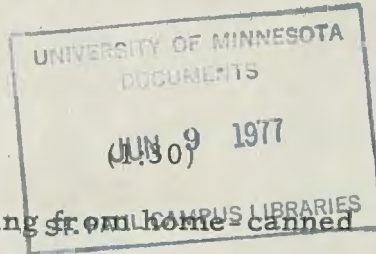
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consumer radio briefs

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Safe Canning



The recent outbreak of botulism poisoning from home canned peppers in Michigan underscores the necessity of using scientifically developed processes for safe home canning.

University of Minnesota food scientists Theodore Labuza and Isabel Wolf say home canning looks simple, but attention to every detail is essential to retention of nutrients and to safety. According to an Institute of Food Technologists report, some foods are naturally more acid than others, and this higher acidity makes the bacteria which produce poisons in canned food easier to kill. Tomatoes--high-acid food--can be successfully heat processed in a boiling water bath at 212 degrees F, while string beans--low-acid food--must be processed in a pressure canner at 240 degrees F. These natural acids have the ability to inhibit or prevent the growth of many of the microorganisms which produce spoilage and disease.

Recent publicity about low-acid tomatoes has led some home canners to question whether they can safely be processed in a boiling water bath. Agriculture Department and University of Minnesota research determined that none of the supposedly low-acid tomatoes were truly low enough in acid to permit the production of poison from botulinum bacteria. Such tomatoes can thus be safely canned in a boiling water bath.

However, the scientists did find that the acidity of tomatoes drops as they pass ripeness, and that canning of over-ripe tomatoes could lead to serious problems.

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