

Save Your Summer Harvest! // Freezing Vegetables



Tips on how you can enjoy your garden veggies all year long!

Don't Forget About Your Freezer

Summer gardens have been planted, and it won't be long before it will be time to preserve the harvest. Canning and dehydrating are always options, but freezing is my favorite way to preserve vegetables.

I like freezing because it's fast. Freezing also preserves the fresh flavor and bright color of the vegetables. And, because vegetables are harvested at their peak and prepared and frozen quickly, they keep their nutrients.

You can prepare excellent frozen vegetables at home by following these tips.

1. Find a good set of instructions. I recommend the National Center for Home Food Preservation, <http://nchfp.uga.edu/>. They have lots of great information about freezing, canning, dehydrating, pickling and making jams and jellies. You can find general information or instructions for preserving a specific food.

2. Harvest the vegetables when they are tender and fresh. The quality will not improve with freezing. Start with the best.

3. Blanch vegetables to preserve their quality and extend the time they can be stored in the freezer. Using a blancher (a pan with an insert that holds the vegetables and allows you to lower the vegetables into the boiling water and lift them out) makes this job easier. Chill the vegetables in ice water for the same amount of time they were blanched.

4. Package the vegetables in air-tight boxes, plastic containers or bags designed for the freezer. Remove as much of the air as possible. Using containers specially designed for the freezer will help preserve the quality of the vegetables for a longer time.

5. Label and date the containers so you know what is in them and how long they have been stored.

6. Store frozen vegetables in an upright or chest freezer at 0° F or colder. The quality of the vegetables won't last as long if they are stored in the warmer temperatures of the refrigerator's freezer compartment.

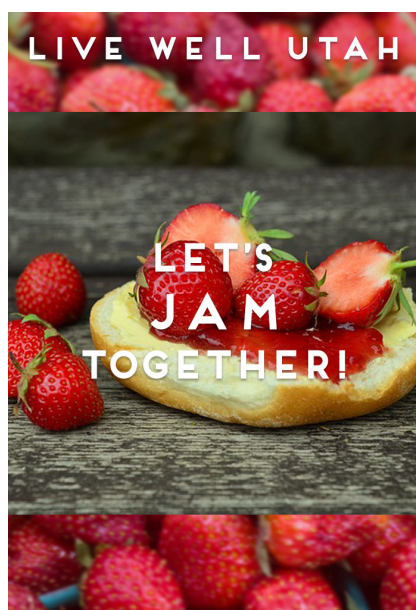
Start preparing now so you will be ready when the peas, spinach, corn and summer squash are ready to harvest.

This article was written by Ann Henderson

References:

National Center for Home Food Preservation

Let's Jam! // Making Homemade Jams and Jellies



With berries and other fruits in season, right now is the best time to start jamming!

Making Jam is Berry Easy

If you have berries from your garden coming out of your ears, making fruit spreads is a wonderful way to use them up. It might seem intimidating, but with the right recipes and tips, making jams and jellies is fun and simple.

Jam or Jelly?

First things first, do you know the difference between jam and jelly?

Jam is made by boiling fruit and sugar to a thick consistency and has fruit bits.

Jelly is made by boiling sugar, the juice of fruit with gelatin or pectin, and doesn't have fruit bits.

There are also other delicious spreads made with fruit such as marmalade, fruit preserves, fruit compote and fruit butter!

Don't know where to get started? **Here is a fact sheet** from USU Extension with more than ***20 delicious recipes!***

For a great way to enjoy your delicious garden strawberries all year long, try this simple freezer jam recipe. Not only is it easy, but this jam will last in your freezer for up to one year. Now that's a good reason to get into a sticky situation!

Freezer Strawberry Jam

- 2 cups crushed fresh strawberries
- 4 cups sugar
- 1 (1.75 ounce) package dry pectin
- 3/4 cup water

Mix crushed strawberries with sugar, and let stand for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, stir the pectin into the water in a small

saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and boil for 1 minute. Stir the boiling water into the strawberries. Allow to stand for 3 minutes before pouring into jars or other storage containers.

Place tops on the containers and leave for 24 hours. Place into freezer, and store frozen until ready to use.

Recipe courtesy of Carolyn Washburn, Extension professor.

References

Freezer Jams

Plan Today to Preserve Tomorrow



Before you know it, you'll be up to your ears in fresh garden pickin's. Make sure you're ready for the harvest so that you can enjoy every last bit of it!

Prepping For Your Preservation

With summer upon us, it's time to plan for a great season of home food preservation. The first step is to assess your canning equipment and supplies to ensure they are in proper working condition to assure safe, high-quality preserved foods.

Canning Jars and Lids

Assess the amount and condition of your canning jars to determine if additional bottles are needed. It is recommended to only use Mason-type jars that are made specifically for home canning. Check the bottles for scratches, cracks, nicks or chips. Nicked or chipped bottle rims will not seal properly, and scratched bottles may cause cracking or breakage while processing, so it is best to dispose of those bottles. Bottles that are not made specifically for canning may break under high heat or pressure and may experience more seal failures. The same is true for very old Mason jars that have weakened over time.

Jars come in many sizes from half-pint to half-gallon, and it is important to use the jar size that is specified in a recipe. Half-gallon jars should only be used for canning very acidic juices such as apple juice or grape juice.

It is recommended to use two-piece flat metal lids and screwing bands for processing. The USDA Complete Guide to Home

Canning states that gaskets in unused lids work well for at least five years from the manufacturing date. Do not use old, used, dented or deformed lids, but the screw bands are reusable as long as they are not bent, dented or rusted.

Boiling Water Canners

Boiling water canners, or water bath canners, are used for canning high-acid foods such as fruits, pickles, jams/jellies and acidified tomatoes. Most water bath canners are designed to hold seven quart jars or eight to nine pint jars. These canners are made of aluminum or porcelain-coated steel with a removable rack and a lid.

A water bath canner should be deep enough to allow at least an inch or two of boiling water to cover the bottles during processing. Flat bottom water bath canners are recommended for electric ranges and the canner should be no more than 4-inches wider in diameter than the electric element to ensure uniform processing of all the jars in the canner. Flat or ridged-bottom canners can be used on gas burners.

Pressure Canners

Low-acid foods, such as meat, poultry, fish, vegetables and dried beans, must be processed in a pressure canner. There are two types of pressure canners: dial-gauge and weighted-gauge. The dial gauge on pressure canners should be checked for accuracy every year. Inaccurate gauges that read high may cause under-processing resulting in unsafe food, and low readings cause over-processing.

Every pound of pressure is very important to the temperature needed inside the canner for properly processed food. Gauges may be checked at local Extension offices. Weighted-gauges do not need to be checked for accuracy. For most altitudes in Utah, weighted-gauges must be operated at a canner pressure of 15 PSI.

Useful Tools

Helpful tools for home canning include a jar lifter to aid in removing hot jars from the canner. A bubble remover frees air bubbles from inside the jar to aid in maintaining a proper headspace. Some bubble removers have a headspace measurer on one end. A lid lifter is a tool with a magnet on the end to lift lids from hot water.

A very important tool to have for food preservation is using research-tested recipes. The USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning has updated canning instructions. The National Center for Home Food Preservation (<http://nchfp.uga.edu/>) is another excellent source for current research-based recommendations for most methods of home food preservation. Most local Extension offices have current research-based information for safe home food preservation.

Proper planning now will help to ensure a successful canning season.

This article was written by Marie Anderson.

Cook in Season // Rhubarb Rules!



Pies, tarts and crisps, oh my! Rhubarb season is officially in full swing. Not only is rhubarb nutritious, it's also delicious and extremely versatile. Find out how you can use this super vegetable while it's in season!

Summer is on its way and rhubarb desserts are starting to make their debut. Rhubarb treats are tasty and tangy, which make them a great addition to any summer party.

Did you know that rhubarb is also extremely rich in fiber and high in Vitamin C? Visit **eatwellutah.org** to see the other benefits of rhubarb and how you can use it. You will even find a low-sugar muffin recipe that your whole family will love!

7 Factors That Prolong Your Food Storage Supply

Author – Carolyn Washburn, Extension Professor



Getting in the habit of storing food has many benefits. These benefits range from financial savings to having a balanced diet throughout the year. Above all, learning how you can get the most out of your food storage will help eliminate stress and ensure peace of mind.

Storing food is a traditional, domestic skill that has been used for thousands of years in time of plenty to prepare for times of famine or when food is in short supply. Wheat found stored in vessels in the tombs of Egypt was still edible after 4,000 years. Regularly, food is preserved and stored to be eaten from harvest to harvest as families strive to be self-sustaining. It is interesting to note that food is stored by almost every human society and by many animals. Maintaining a food supply often ensures savings of time and money and provides safety and security in time of need. Storing food has several main purposes:

- Preserves harvested and processed food products for later use
- Provides a balanced diet throughout the year

- Prepares for catastrophes, emergencies and periods of food scarcity or famine
- Religious reasons
- Peace of mind
- Provides self-sustainability

Factors that affect food storage:

Temperature: The temperature at which food is stored is very critical to shelf life. United States Department of Agriculture, USDA, states that for every 10.8 degrees in temperature rise you decrease the shelf life of stored food by half. The best range for food storage is a constant temperature between 40-60 degrees. Avoid freezing temperatures.

Moisture: It is recommended to remove moisture when storing foods. For long-term storage, foods should have a 10% or less moisture content.

Oxygen: Foods store best when oxygen free. Removing oxygen will prevent oxidation of compounds in foods. Ways to remove oxygen:

- Displacing oxygen – Purge air from product with an inert gas (nitrogen). Dry ice is often used giving off carbon dioxide gas, which displaces oxygen.
- Oxygen absorber – Air contains about 78% nitrogen and 21% oxygen, leaving about 1% for the other gasses. If the oxygen is absorbed, what remains is 99% pure nitrogen in a partial vacuum.

Light: This form of energy can degrade the value of foods. Store food in dark areas.

Container: Store foods in food-grade plastic, metal or glass containers indicating that the container does not contain chemicals that could be transferred to food and be harmful to your health. For best storage life, use containers with a

hermetic (air tight) seal. Containers with air tight seals are:

- #10 cans
- Sealable food storage buckets
- Sealable food quality metal (lined) or plastic drums
- Foil pouches
- PETE bottles (for dry products such as wheat, corn, and beans)

The containers listed above, used with oxygen absorber packets, eliminate food-borne insects and help preserve nutritional quality and taste.

Warning – Botulism poisoning may result if moist products are stored in packaging that reduces oxygen. When stored in airtight containers with oxygen absorbers, products must be dry (about 10% or less moisture content).

Infestation: Several common insects infest home-stored dried foods. To control with cold treatment, put infested items in a deep freeze (0 degrees) for three to four days which will kill any live insects, larva and eggs.

Shelf date is the “best if used by” date, meaning that you are getting most of the original taste and nutrition. The “life sustaining shelf life” date means the length of time that food is still edible.

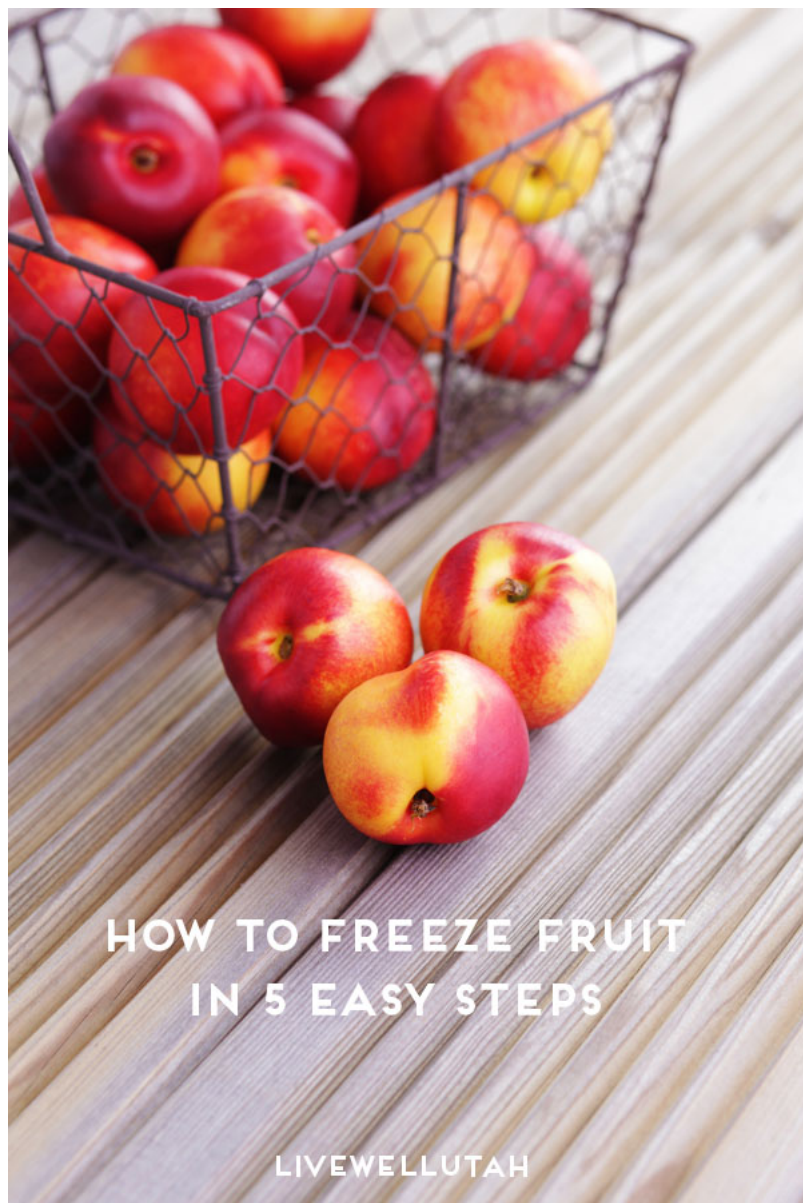


Carolyn Washburn is a family consumer sciences agent for Utah State University Extension. Her responsibilities include financial management education, food safety and nutrition, healthy family relations, emergency preparedness and working with youth. Her goal is to help individuals and families become self-sustaining and resilient by being financially prepared and healthy for any emergency. She serves on the National

Disaster Education Network and has just completed the new food storage manual for USDA. Her most cherished award is America's Promise, awarded by Colin Powell.

5 Fruit Freezing Steps

Author – Amanda Christensen



Want to preserve your harvest without busting your budget? Don't want to fork out a ton of your hard-earned dollars? Whether you haven't invested in the equipment for home canning or you just don't have the time, don't let your harvest go to waste. Freezing fruit is a great option. Here are five simple steps to follow to freeze fruit. I will use nectarines in this example but these steps can be followed for any fruit.

STEP 1: Wash your fruit well. Cut in half and remove pits. If desired, peel skins from fruit. (I prefer the skins on since we use these nectarines for smoothies during the winter and the skins are full of nutrients).



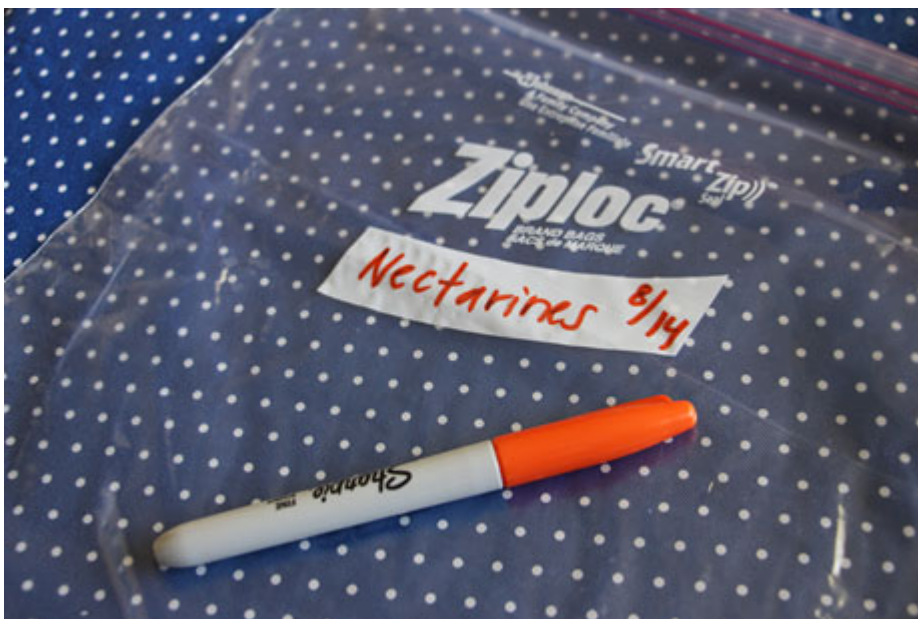
STEP 2: Spread fruit out in a single layer on a baking sheet. (Optional: treat fruit with citric acid, lemon juice or Fruit-Fresh to help prevent browning over time). Freezing fruit flat on a baking sheet helps fruit freeze without it sticking together in big clumps.



STEP 3: Freeze 2-3 hours. Fruit might not be completely frozen but won't stick together once you place it in freezer bags.



STEP 4: While fruit is freezing, label gallon-sized freezer bags with the name and date of the fruit you are freezing.



STEP 5: Fill freezer bags $\frac{3}{4}$ full with frozen fruit. Store fruit flat in a freezer. It is best if it is used within 6 months but will last up to 1 year.



Amanda is an Extension assistant professor for Utah State University. She has a master's degree in consumer sciences from USU and is proud to call herself an Aggie! Amanda loves teaching and enabling individuals and families to make smart money decisions.

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Oh Deer! How Do You Preserve

Wild Game?

Author – Margie Memmott



So you've just had a successful hunt with enough meat to feed your family for the entire year. Now make sure all your hard work pays off and that your meat is safe to use later. Whether you want to freeze, can or dry and jerky your hunt, follow these steps and do it right.

Click [here](#) to download the USU Extension Pamphlet: How to Properly Preserve Venison. We will teach you the methods of selecting and preparing, freezing, canning, making sausage,

drying and storing venison.



Margie Memmott has been serving families and communities for more than 20 years with USU Extension in Juab County. Margie earned degrees in family and consumer sciences from BYU and USU and loves to teach youth and adults valuable life skills. “What a great reward when others adopt these principles and apply the tools to improve their everyday lives.” Margie and her husband Sam have four sons, three daughters-in-law and two grandsons. In her spare time she enjoys creative textiles/sewing, crocheting, music, technology, four wheeling in the ‘RZR’ and most of all, being with her family.

Reminder of Home Canning No-No's

Author – Kathy Riggs

REMINDER OF HOME CANNING NO-NO'S



Tomatoes are ripening on a regular basis, corn is about ready to harvest and beets are ready to pick and process...yesterday. So, as home food preservation gets underway in force, there are a few reminders of how to avoid common canning mistakes and some of the limitations of home canning.

Major Canning Mistakes – Potentially Deadly

*Making up your own canning recipe. Without scientific testing, you will not know how long the product needs to be processed to be safe–this includes salsas.

*Adding EXTRA starch, flour or other thickener to recipe. This will slow the rate of heat penetration into the product and

can result in under cooking.

*Adding EXTRA onions, chilies, bell peppers or other vegetables to salsas. The extra vegetables dilute the acidity and can result in botulism poisoning.

*Using an oven instead of water bath for processing. The product will be under processed since air is not as good a conductor of heat as water or steam. The jars also may break or explode.

*Not making altitude adjustments. Since boiling temperatures are lower at higher altitudes, the products will be under processed. Pressure canning requires adding more pounds of pressure while water bath canning requires more processing time.

*Not venting pressure canner. Lack of venting can result in air pockets (cold spots) which will not reach as high a temperature as needed.

*Failure to acidify canned tomatoes. Not all tomatoes have an adequate acid level (pH), especially if the vine is dead when tomatoes are harvested. This can result in botulism poisoning. Make certain to use bottled lemon juice, which has a standard 4.5 acid level. The acid level of fresh lemons can vary.

Minor Canning Mistakes – Economic Loss, But Results Not Deadly

*Use of mayonnaise jars. The thinner walls of the glass may break, especially if used in a pressure canner, and it may be more difficult to obtain a good seal. However, if it seals, it is safe to use.

*Use of paraffin on jams and jellies. Small air holes in the paraffin may allow mold to grow. Also, paraffin can catch on fire if overheated during preparation. If preserves do have mold growth, the recommendation is not to eat the product, but discard it.

*Cooling too slowly after removing from canner. (Example: stacked jars close together.) There is a group of harmless organisms called thermophiles that can survive canning. If bottles are held hot for long periods, they can produce acid (fermentation). This results in the defect known as “flatsour.” This is harmless, but produces an undesirable flavor.

Cautions Issued for Specific Foods

- Butter – For now, canning butter using any method is not recommended. Some methods are dangerous at best; others are not backed by science.
- Hydrated wheat kernels (berries) – Starch in wheat may interfere with the heat penetration during canning. Insufficient processing can result in botulism food poisoning. Wheat should be stored dry until used or refrigerated up to several days if hydrated for use in the near future.
- Quick Breads (e.g., banana, zucchini, pumpkin) – Baking quick breads in canning jars and then placing a lid and ring on the jar to create a vacuum seal as it cools does not kill botulism-forming organisms that grow in warm, moist, anaerobic conditions. These items should be either baked fresh and served or frozen.
- Dried Beans (pinto, kidney, etc.) – To safely can dried beans, they must be hydrated first (usually 12 to 18 hours) and then brought to a boil for 30 min. Hot beans are then placed into hot jars for processing.

General Rules

1. Always use up-to-date, scientifically tested canning recipes.
2. Only use approved, up-to-date canning methods (boiling water bath or pressure).
3. Follow canning directions exactly.

Of course there are more instructions for successful and safe home food preservation. For answers to specific questions, please contact your local USU Extension office or see the National Center for Home Food Preservation website at <http://nchfp.uga.edu/> which is a clearinghouse for USDA canning guidelines and recipes.



Kathleen Riggs is the Utah State University Extension family and consumer sciences professor for Iron County. She loves yard/garden work, where her favorite tasks are weeding and mowing the lawn. Her favorite appliance is the microwave oven, and her specialty is microwave caramels. She loves family time and occasions that bring everyone together from near or far.

4 Tips and Reminders for Harvest Preservation

Author – SuzAnne Jorgensen



4 tips & reminders for **HARVEST PRESERVATION**

LIVE WELL UTAH

The golden leaves and the beginning of cooler weather remind us that it is once again harvest season. Whether you are preserving end-of-the-season garden items or canning deer or other game meats, it is important to follow safe canning principles.

Remember to adjust for altitude. Many recipes are written for sea level with a reminder of altitude adjustment in the beginning of the recipe book. For pressure canning in higher altitudes, the pressure is generally increased. For water bath canning, the time is increased. Contact your local USU Extension county office for an altitude chart specific to your county.

Have your pressure canner gauge tested annually. Canner gauges should be tested once a year before canning. Call your local

county Extension office for an appointment. In many offices, you can drop your lid (with gauge attached) by their office for testing. Call first to be sure.

Follow an approved, laboratory-tested recipe and don't make adjustments to recipes. USDA, Ball (Kerr is now owned by the same company as Ball), the Center for Home Food Preservation, and Land-grant University Extension Services such as USU Extension are the most approved recipe sources. There are many recipes that are passed around that may not be safe. Information can be found on the National Center for Home Food Preservation website at www.uga.edu/nchfpor on the USU Extension website at <http://extension.usu.edu/foodpreservation/>.

Fruits (high acid foods) can be canned in a boiling water canner, and vegetables and meats (low acid foods) need to be pressure canned. Although we think of tomatoes as being acidic and safe for water-bath canning, their pH level usually falls on the border, so acid should be added. Be sure to follow guidelines from an approved source. Do not can tomatoes from a dead or frost-killed vine. When vegetables are added to tomatoes, as with salsa, the pH level is raised and sufficient acid needs to be added to be safe.

Freezing Foods. Foods preserved by freezing do not have as many safety guidelines, and most of the recommendations for freezing are for quality rather than safety. Blanching is recommended for longer-term freezing to stop the enzyme activity and help preserve the quality of the fruits or vegetables.



SuzAnne Jorgensen works with adult and youth groups and

individuals to educate them in the areas of canning, food safety, nutrition, finances, small business and many other topics related to home, family and business through Utah State University Extension in Garfield County.

How To Can Apricots

Author – Amanda Christensen



HOW TO CAN APRICOTS

LIVE WELL UTAH

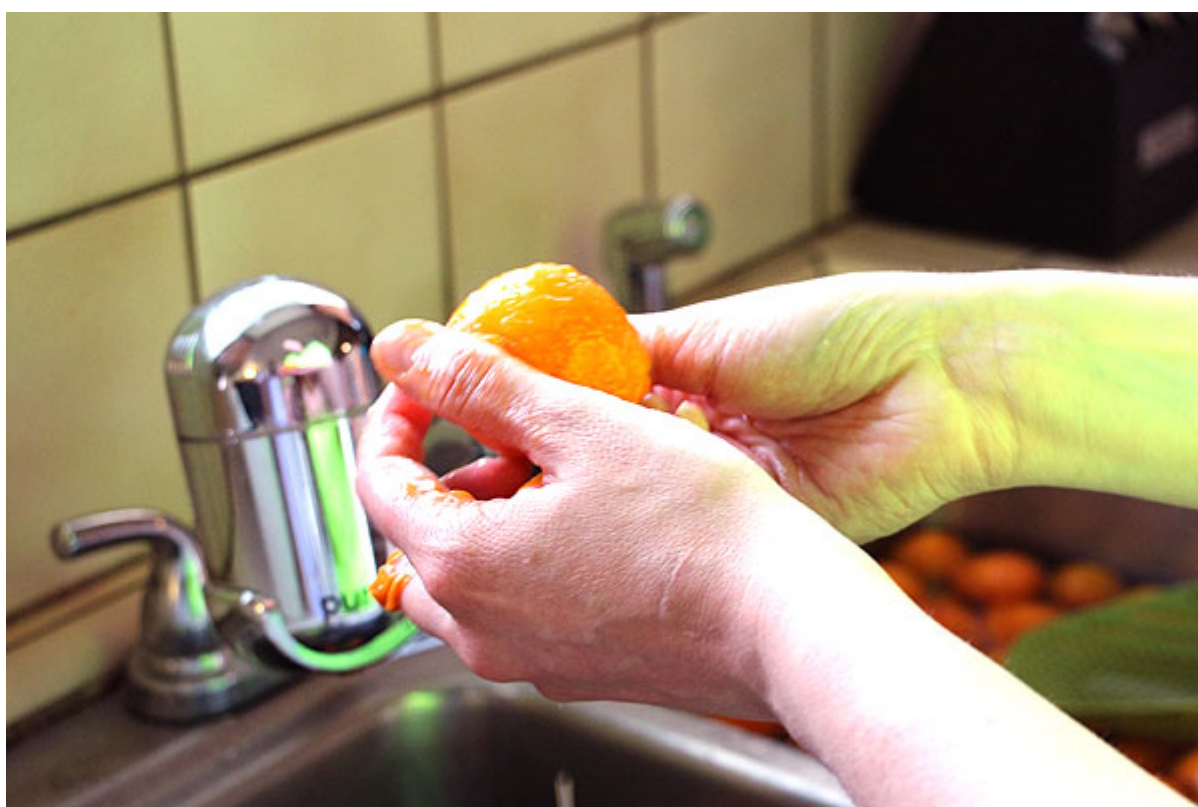
It's that time of year again...the popcorn has popped on the apricot tree in my backyard and we are enjoying the sweet,

tangy taste right from the tree. There are a number of ways to enjoy the apricots now as well as later.

When the apricots are fresh, we love to enjoy them as a fabulously refreshing smoothie. Blend five to six fresh apricots with 1/2 cup apple juice and 1 cup of ice for a delicious treat.

To keep this delicious treat available even after the harvest is over, I decided to whip out the boiling water bath canner and preserve a few quarts of apricot halves and pints of delicious apricot nectar. Here's a step-by-step guide following the USDA canning guidelines:





Hot Pack: Wash and blanch apricots; remove peel.



Cut in half and pit.



Make a light syrup by mixing 2 1/4 cups sugar with 5 1/4 cups water. Cook apricots in syrup one layer at a time until hot throughout.



Pack hot apricots, cavity side down, into hot jars, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Ladle hot syrup over apricots, leaving 1/2-inch headspace.



Remove air bubbles, adjust two-piece caps. If you live at sea

level process pints 20 minutes, quarts 25 minutes, in a boiling-water canner. Note the additional time needed in the chart below based on the altitude in your area:

Altitude in Feet	Increase Processing Time
1,001-3,000	5 Minutes
3,001-6,000	10 Minutes
6,001-8,000	15 Minutes
8,001-10,000	20 Minutes



Amanda is an Extension Assistant Professor for Utah State University. She has a master's degree in consumer sciences from Utah State and is proud to call herself an Aggie! Amanda loves teaching and enabling individuals and families to make smart money decisions.

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