

## Preserve@Home increases food preservation knowledge and behavior

### AT A GLANCE

**An increase in planned behavior change was reported in the retrospective pre/post survey indicating participants were less likely to engage in high risk canning behaviors.**

### The Situation

The growing popularity of vegetable gardening and buying locally grown produce has sparked an increase in home food preservation, such as canning, freezing and drying. In 2015, research conducted by ORC International on behalf of the Ball brand canning line found that nearly half of all millennials (49 percent) surveyed were interested in canning. The primary reason was because they love cooking and canning seems fun (38 percent). This research also found that 68 percent of Americans would rather make their own fresh foods than purchase store bought food.

Many home canners are inexperienced and may not have been trained in safe home food preservation techniques. Consumer food safety, food preservation and food storage questions are common at University of Idaho Extension offices because Extension is recognized as a source of current and reliable information. However, not all UI Extension offices have a family and consumer sciences (FCS) educator who is knowledgeable in food safety and home food preservation techniques. Some parts of Idaho are rural or remote and do not have access to in-person food preservation classes. Additionally, many individuals do not have the time to take an in-person food preservation class.



Three canning jars. (bigstockphoto.com)

### Our Response

Extension faculty from multiple states (Idaho, Colorado and Oregon) provide Preserve@Home, an online home food safety and preservation class taught twice a year through <http://campus.extension.org>. The class is divided into six main lessons and six supplemental lessons. Each of the main lessons includes online text (that can be downloaded and printed), weekly online discussion boards to facilitate student interaction, a real-time online chat with classmates and instructors, open book lesson quizzes and a final test to assess knowledge gained.

### Program Outcomes

In the 12 years that Preserve@Home has been offered, over 300 participants have taken the class. The participants have not only been from Idaho, but also from across the U.S. and even from Canada. During the years of 2011-2016, 168 (68 percent) of the 246 participants passed the class with a 70 percent or higher.

A retrospective pre/post survey was given to a subsample of 21 participants. Participants reported their reasons for taking Preserve@Home with 86 percent to be in control of what’s in their food, 76 percent wanted to save money, 95 percent desired to be more self-sufficient and 76 percent wanted to better use the produce they grew. Additional participant behavior responses results are in the table.

<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Learned</b>	<b>Didn't Do Before</b>	<b>Will Do After</b>
Used up-to-date, tested, research-based canning recipes and recommendations	67%	57%	95%
Adjusted processing time for altitude when using a boiling water canner	33%	33%	95%
Adjusted for altitude when pressure canning by increasing the pressure for your elevation	52%	43%	95%
Added lemon juice or other acid when canning tomatoes and tomato products	57%	48%	95%
Vented pressure canner for 10 minutes before processing	62%	52%	95%
Followed the proper pressure canner cool down procedure	48%	38%	95%
Processed all high acid foods in a boiling water canner according to research based recommendations	52%	48%	95%
Processed all low acid foods in a pressure canner according to research-based recommendations	62%	57%	95%
When making home canned salsa, followed a tested research based recipe and processed according to recommendations	71%	67%	95%

The nine identified behaviors are all high risk behaviors. For example, if food is consumed without following these recommendations, the result could potentially lead to serious harm or death of individuals. An important increase in planned behavior change was noted after participation in the online program.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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