

Home Food Preservation

Summary of Significant Trends:

Home food preservation is a popular means for preserving seasonal produce or specialty foods for longer periods of time. If not done properly, these products could be a source of botulism, a potentially deadly foodborne illness.

Emerging Trends:

In the United States an average of 110 cases of botulism are reported each year. Of these, approximately 25% are foodborne. Outbreaks of foodborne botulism involving two or more persons occur most years and usually are caused by eating contaminated home-canned foods. The best prevention is safe canning of foods.

In 2000-2001, the University of Georgia conducted a telephone interview of 501 households randomly selected across the nation to assess home canning practices. This was the first time that a survey assessing home canning practices had been completed since 1975. The results clearly revealed that greater adoption of science-based home canning techniques were needed. Friends or relatives (48%) and cookbooks (19%) were the most popular sources of canning instructions. Two-thirds (67%) reported using their home-canning instructions "as is", while 29% adapted them for use. Many people were not canning vegetables in a pressure canner (the only safe way to can vegetables) so were putting

themselves at high risk for botulism. For example, 39% reported using a boiling water canner, 15% the open kettle method (simply placing hot food in a jar and sealing), and 3% the oven. Thirty-eight percent (38%) reported having jars that did not seal properly. Only 24% had the dial gauge on their pressure canner tested thus increasing the likelihood that the product might be overprocessed or underprocessed. Over a quarter of the respondents (26%) did not use approved jars and new lids.

Relevance of Trends to County Programs:

The best way to improve adoption of safe home canning techniques is through providing research-based information and educational programs. Since its inception, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service has been the primary source of research-based information about home food preservation for consumers. Even today home food preservation is still widely practiced as evident by the hundreds of calls County Extension Centers receive every year from consumers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recognizes that the county extension center is the expert on safe canning instructions. In their educational materials about botulism, they cite the Cooperative Extension Service as the best source of home canning instructions. Thus, extension agents are the on

the frontline of preventing foodborne botulism poisoning due to in-home canning.

Sources of Supporting Data:

National Center for Home Food Preservation

[www.uga.edu/nchfp/educators/
natl_survey_summary.html](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/educators/natl_survey_summary.html)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—
Botulism

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/
botulism_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/botulism_g.htm)

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