

Ask the Agent

Q: Is it safe to use "old" canning jars and how long can I keep home preserved food in my pantry?"

A: Part 1: Yes, you can reuse old canning jars. It helps reduce the cost of canning. However, you need to check the rims of the jars for nicks, cracks or other damage that compromise the surface where the caps seal to. Run your finger over the rim as well as make a close visual inspection. Always wash your jars before you use. The dust and other potentially damaging bacteria that may have found it's way back on the jar needs to be removed. Don't use wire brushes, steel wool, or abrasive materials as they can damage the quality of the jar. If you have a white film on the exterior surface, wash the jar in a solution of 1 cup of vinegar to 1 gallon of water and rinse thoroughly. Part 2: According to the Ball Blue Book guide to Preserving, "Foods canned following tested recipes and correct processing methods and processing time can be safely stored for 1 year."

Functional Foods Fight Disease

I recently received my June edition of the Mayo Clinic Health Letter which shared a lot of information about the role of functional food in a healthy diet. Functional foods are those foods that have naturally occurring nutritional compounds, called phytochemicals, that have been found to have health-promoting effects on our body.

These compounds are found in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and are likely already a part of your diet. As a general rule, the compounds help prevent disease and help the body fight off chronic diseases. Some of the functional foods that have known physical benefits include bananas, oranges, spinach, green beans, asparagus, barley, brown rice, and oats among many others.



There are a few simple things you can do to increase the amount of functional foods you consume daily:

- ⇒ Eat more vegetables. Consume vegetables of a variety of colors, but emphasize the dark green leafy vegetables. Use fresh or frozen vegetables to get the most nutritive value.
- ⇒ Include fruit at every meal or sneak them in as a healthy snack alternative. Blackberries and blueberries are easy to pack and are rich in antioxidants and other nutrients. Three servings of fresh fruits a day should be your minimum target.
- ⇒ A high-fiber cereal will boost your readily-available energy, improve concentration at work, while working to promote a healthier heart.
- ⇒ Eat whole-grain breads and pastas. Whole grain means that the product includes the endosperm, germ, and bran which provide a high level of nutrients.
- ⇒ Eat fish at least twice a week. This will add natural omega-3 fatty acids to your diet which also promotes a healthy heart.
- ⇒ Drink water with every meal and drink a couple of glasses in between! Stay away from the sugared sodas and other sugary drinks. Other water-based beverages, such as coffee and tea are a better alternative than sugared drinks.

Preserve the Harvest Program—June 13 Junction City Church of the Nazarene

Even if you don't have your own garden, the abundance of fruits and vegetables you can purchase at the local grocery store or farmers market may have you interested in learning how to preserve foods at home. Perhaps you already use canning to extend your food pantry inventory. Regardless of your level of experience, there's a lot to learn and do at this workshop. Register by contacting the Geary County Extension office by 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 10. Registration fee of \$20 covers produce, jars, lunch, and refreshments. Hope to see you there!

Summer Travel Tips

Enjoying your family's summer vacation or even the short day trips you may take as family outings begins with planning. Here are some quick tips to ensure you have a fun and safe trip.

⇒ Plan ahead for safety. Make sure your automobile has been serviced, the tires checked, and the interior tidied up before you leave. Make sure, if you need child safety seats, that they are secured correctly and meet the laws and regulations of the area you are traveling in. Check out the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for details at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/>. Travel with some large sealable storage bags and paper towels for quick clean-up after snacks or "accidents" that often happen while traveling. Keep a small bottle of hand sanitizer along with a first-aid kit. Make sure the children know their phone numbers and what to do if you get separated.

⇒ Plan out activities that work in the confines of a car. Our family has a road atlas that my kids have highlighted our routes on. When we are going somewhere new, they get out the highlighter and mark our journey. Try audio books from the public

library. Make sure they are age-appropriate and fun to listen to. My children are always excited to go to the library to pick a few books out before we leave for an extended trip.

⇒ Plan regular stops at parks or other outdoor venues to give everyone a chance for a stretch and some physical activity. This may also allow you a chance to change drivers and give the drivers a break.

⇒ Plan for snacks. Keep them simple like granola bars, fresh fruit, or trail mix. Take a small cooler to put yogurt tubes or cheese sticks in.

⇒ Plan ahead for media use. Make sure the devices are charged and have kid-friendly games loaded on them. Just as recommended for home, set a time limit for how long each person uses media.

2014 Special Baking Contest

Each year, the Geary County Free Fair sponsors a special baking contest for a specific baked product. Products are judged based on their flavor, texture, appearance, and overall quality. Prizes are awarded to the top three entries. The 2014 special baking contest product is for:

Multi-Grain Loaf Bread

An entry is to consist of multi-grain yeast bread loaf that is uniform in size: 8 ½ x 4 ½ x 2 ½ inches *OR* 9 x 5 x 3 inches. No fruit breads will be accepted. Recipe can be any combination of grains, but must contain a minimum of 3 different grains and a minimum of 30% whole wheat flour.

- ◆ Each entry must be prepared from scratch and baked by the person whose name is on the entry form.
- ◆ Although submitting a detailed recipe is not required, the recipe submitted must list the various grains included and their measurements, at a minimum. The recipe should NOT contain the name of the baker. Contestant recipes will be returned to the contestant after the contest.
- ◆ Entry must be displayed on stiff, foil-covered cardboard, and enclosed in a food-grade plastic bag.
- ◆ Bread loaf will be judged on the inclusion of at least 3 grains, taste, texture, flavor, and appearance.
- ◆ Commercial bread mixes are not allowed in this contest.
- ◆ One entry per person is allowed.
- ◆ Contest is open to youth and adults. All entries are judged in a single category.

Note: Bread loafs will be sold after judging. One slice of the first, second, and third place entries will be displayed in the Open Class Food showcase.

Entries in the Baking Contest are not eligible for awards in the Open Class or 4-H baking competition. However, bread loafs made from the same recipe or the same batch may be entered in 4-H or Open Class.

Wednesday, July 23, 2014

Entries Accepted 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.; Judged 5:30 p.m.

Geary County Free Fair - "Fair Dynasty"

Open Class Q & A

Q: Why would I want to enter an exhibit into the open class fair?

A: It's fun, educational, and you can meet other people with similar interests. Perhaps you have a hobby that you would like others to see, or perhaps you are babysitting your 5 year old grandson and have completed some craft projects that could be entered. Regardless of your age or interests, there is something for everyone at the Geary County Free Open Class Fair.

Q: Who can participate in the open class fair events?

A: Any person who lives in Geary County, Fort Riley, or surrounding counties can participate in the open class events.

Q: How old do you have to be to participate?

A: There is no age limit, but there is a minimum age of 4. Children age 4 to 15 will be entered in the youth division and a judged separately from those 16 years of age and older.

Q: How is open class events different from 4-H events?

A: Participants in open class are not and cannot participate in 4-H events. The open class events are designed for the general public. Although children have the opportunity to join a 4-H group, not all children choose to do so. Open class events offer them a place to enter and display their products. For example, if a child has participated in a summer art camp, they can enter one of their projects in open class arts & crafts. Another example would be an adult who likes to make leather-tooled products such as a wallet who enters one of their products in the crafts division.

Q: What kinds of products can be entered in the open class fair?

A: In a word: Anything. There are 9 departments that include a variety of classes in each – totaling over 350 classes that products can be entered in to. Participants can enter 3 products for each class. Departments include: Food Preparation, Food Preservation, Textiles, Arts & Crafts, Photography, Floriculture, Horticulture, Agriculture, and EEU Displays and Banners.

Q: Do entries have to be created/made by the person entering the product?

A: All work must be the work of the person entering the exhibit. It must have been completed within the past two years (July 2012 – July 2014) except for food preservation products which must have been preserved since July of 2013. Work not done by the participant can be displayed but will NOT be judged and will not be eligible for prizes. Additionally, articles that have previously been entered are not eligible for competition.

Q: Are there prizes given out?

A: YES! All exhibits receive ribbon awards. Children and adults alike, appreciate recognition for their hard work and attention to detail. They can earn that recognition when they enter an exhibit in the fair. Champion and Reserve Champion ribbons will be awarded in a division, if the judge determines the entries merit such recognition. As small cash award will be given to the Champion and/or Reserve Champion. Special prizes are designated for the Baking Contest and for the Quilt Division thanks to donations from a variety of businesses and organizations.

If you are interested in entering or just learning more about the Open Class Fair, drop by the Geary County Extension Office to pick up an Open Class fair book or you can access it on our website at: <http://www.geary.ksu.edu> (look for the tab on the left side of the home page "Geary County Free Fair" In addition to listing the various divisions and classes you can exhibit in, the fair book contains entry requirements for each department, the time various entries must be entered by, and when they will be judged.

Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

****Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register****

June

****13** — Preserving The Harvest—Karen Blakeslee, K-State Rapid Response Center Coordinator, food safety and food preservation expert, will present this interactive workshop which will include a pressure canner lab, water bath lab, and jelly lab. This all day program is located at the Junction City Church of the Nazarene, 1022 Washington Street; registration form for this event is enclosed with this newsletter

July

20-24 — Geary County Free Fair, exhibits accepted from active 4-H members and community members alike; fun for the entire family; stop by the Extension Office to pick up the 4-H Fair Book or the Open Class Fair book for more details.



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