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Buffalo County Extension
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Put a Lid on It! Closures for Home Canning

Many people are continuing to garden and can this summer, which has increased the demand for home canning jars and lids over the past few months. Well-known canning companies have streamlined production and expanded distribution capabilities to replenish stock as quickly as possible. They are currently supplying all their retail partners. The assortment and quantity may vary, so consumers are encouraged to check with other authorized retailers if a retailer is temporarily out of stock.

There are many inferior quality canning supplies available for consumers to buy. Be sure to read *all* the information listed for each product, as titles may be deceiving. To ensure quality, consider ordering directly from the manufacturer or their representative and not from a 3rd party vendor.

Traditional 2-piece metal lids are designed to be used only once. Unused lids should be stored in a cool, dry location and may be good for up to 5 years from the date of manufacture. Over time the sealing compound will degrade, and the lid may fail to seal. These best practice tips will help ensure that jars seal and stay sealed.

- Follow the manufacturer's directions for preparing lids. Traditionally, lids were simmered or boiled prior to applying to jars, but this is generally not the case now. Check the directions.
- Always wash and rinse lids and bands prior to use.
- Leave the proper headspace.
- Clean the jar rim (sealing surface) prior to applying the lid. Food or debris trapped on the jar rim can cause seal failures.
- Place the metal screw band over the flat lid and apply finger-tip tight. Screw bands that are applied too loose, or too tight, can cause jars not to seal properly.

After processing, remove jars from the canner and allow to cool, undisturbed. Do not retighten screw bands. Once jars are completely cool, check for seal. It is a good idea to remove screw bands for storage. When removed, washed, dried, and stored in a dry area, screw bands may be used many times. If left on stored jars, they become difficult to remove, often rust, and may not work properly again.

Recent research suggests that reusable lids such as the Tattler-brand will safely seal jars when used for home-based canning. This type of reusable lid is used with a thin rubber gasket. A metal screw band is also needed during canning! Follow these tips to help ensure that jars seal and stay sealed.

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use carefully. Instructions may vary from the traditional metal two-piece closure.
- Follow 'best practices' for using a metal lid and screw band, applying the lid, gasket and metal screw-band when sealing the jar.

Manufacturer's instruction *may* instruct the user to *tighten the metal band immediately upon removal from the canner. If instructed, do so.* Tightening the screw band ensures that the gasket forms a seal. The metal screw band is removed once the container is cooled, and a seal has formed.

To help ensure a jar seal, limit reusable lids to 10 canning trips. Use a permanent marker to mark each canning 'trip' for a reusable lid and gasket. Once '10 trips' have been marked, it is time to replace the lids (and gaskets). Always replace reusable lids and gaskets if cuts or tears are noticed in the material.

For more home canning information contact Nebraska Extension in Buffalo County, 1400 East 34th Street, Kearney NE 68847, or call (308) 236-1235.

Sources: University of Wisconsin Extension and Ball® websites

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