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Nebraska Extension – Buffalo County
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Storing Canning Equipment

Frost and cold weather are bringing the gardening season to a close. Before packing away canning items remember to clean them, so they will be ready for next year's harvest.

Start by cleaning the vent and safety valve of the pressure canner. Pull a string or narrow piece of cloth through the vent opening. The safety valve should be free of debris and operate freely. Clean the valve by following the manufacturer's instructions.

Check the gasket which is the rubber or rubber-like compound that helps seal the edges of the canner and lid to prevent steam from escaping. Remove the gasket to clean or replace following the manufacturer's directions. New gaskets can be ordered from the canner manufacturer or found at hardware stores. Some canners use a metal to metal seal instead of a rubber gasket.

If the canner has a dial gauge, it will need to be checked yearly for accuracy. This can be done either in the fall or spring. Some local County Extension Offices check dial gauges for accuracy. This should be done in advance of canning season, so if the gauge is inaccurate it can be replaced.

The darkened surface on the inside of an aluminum canner can be cleaned by filling it above the darkened line with a mixture of 1 tablespoon cream of tartar to each quart of water. Place the canner on the stove, heat water to a boil, and boil covered until the dark deposits disappear. Sometimes stubborn deposits may require the addition of more cream of tartar. Empty the canner and wash it with hot soapy water, rinse and dry.

Store the canner with crumpled clean paper towels in the bottom and around the rack. This will help absorb moisture and odors. Place the lid upside down on the canner. Never put the lid on the canner and seal it.

Canning jars can be used for many years if properly used and stored. As canned goods are used check jars for chips or breaks, wash, and store in a safe place. After canning, screw bands should be removed once the jars have sealed, instead of leaving them on the jars during storage. Wash and dry the screw bands completely and store in a dry place. Screw bands can be used over and over, unless they rust. The flat lid can be used only *once* for canning.

If possible, designate a clean and dry storage area for canning equipment and utensils. Clear storage boxes are a great way to organize and store miscellaneous canning utensils.

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