

Speaker 1 ([00:01](#)):

Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. Oh man guys, today's topic lights me up. So excuse me if I get just a little bit fired up today, but we're going to talk again cause I've talked about this before but I feel like I cannot say it enough. We're talking about canning safety. I've been continuing to see debates online on this lately and in my opinion it's not something that should be debated. The science has pretty clearly spoken. So keep on listening for some information that is 100% vital. If you are currently canning or you plan to can at home. I'm your host Jill Winger and for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old-fashioned skills no matter where you live.

Speaker 1 ([01:05](#)):

All right, so this episode today was prompted by my group that I run on Facebook. You've heard me talk about it before. It's called homestead recipes and heritage cooking. And we can drop the link for it in the show notes if you want to join. It's a fantastic group. We have I think, close to 50,000 people on it and it's all about cooking like grandma or cooking like ma Ingles. It's, you know, the sour doughs and the old fashioned recipes and cooking from scratch. Lots of good info. Love the people. They're a fantastic group. That being said, when you put 50,000 people together, sometimes not everyone gets along, right? It's normal. Also the internet need I say more but about once a week, we will get a post about some sort of unsafe canning method. And actually the last few weeks we've had an increase in this topic of posts, which is interesting to me because at the time of this recording, it's January when I kind of figured that no one would be caring about canning right now because it's winter.

Speaker 1 ([02:16](#)):

But anyway, people are thinking about it, they're talking about it. And what usually happens is someone starts out asking an innocent question. Like, I don't have a pressure canner. And I made some stew with beef last night. Can I throw it in some jars and water bath can it? That's an innocent question. Right? Totally cool to ask that. And then we'll have some people give really good information and recommendations in the comments and then we have some people give really bad recommendations in the comments and then people start fighting and arguing of course. Right? Facebook. Um, and so it can get really, really heated. You would be shocked how heated canning can be as far as topics go. So we usually moderate those posts. We'll delete the bad info, we'll close the comments and explain what's safe and what's not. But it's coming up so frequently again that I wanted to address it on a podcast episode cause I know many of you listening, probably will also have a lot of these same questions.

Speaker 1 ([03:21](#)):

So some of the things I hear in the comments when people are trying to defend their unsafe canning methods, they'll say things like, Oh my grandma did this forever, or I've done this before and I didn't die and it tasted fine and we were all fine or it looks in or tastes or smells. Okay, so what's the big deal or my favorite, I am not going to let the government tell me what to do in my kitchen. Right? Uh, yeah. Anyway, so you guys know if you have my cookbook or you read the blog or watch the videos, I'm kind of a rule breaker in the kitchen and I am not afraid. I'm not afraid to cut some corners when going around a certain corner doesn't make sense. Right? I am not afraid to leave out steps. I'm not afraid to tweak ingredients. I am the queen of substitutions because we live a million miles from civilization and I'm not going to run to the store or I can't run to the store to get something that I may be out of.

Speaker 1 ([04:22](#)):

So I am pretty loose in the kitchen, but not when it comes to canning. And why is that? Well, it's because of a little something called botulism. And this is where I believe if people understood what botulism was, we wouldn't have the arguments on Facebook anymore. Right. Would not be an issue. Because if you understand what botulism is and how it works, that's um, when you start to see why, not just cause I'm telling you or not just because the USDA canning book tells you, but why with common sense you should not be pushing the boundaries when it comes to canning foods at home. So let me help you understand this a little bit. Feel free to research botulism on your own. In fact, I encourage that, but I'll give you some tidbits since you're listening so we can be on the same page. I kind of think it's actually interesting.

Speaker 1 ([05:23](#)):

I'm a little bit science nerdy, but it's really, really good to know and understanding these pieces of the kitchen and cooking and food not only help to keep you safe, they also just make you a better cook. Right? You understand why you're doing the things you're doing. So let's talk botulism. It's actually the official scientific name that you would see written in italics if you were reading this episode instead of listening is *Clostridium botulinum*. Probably not saying that right, but close enough. But that's the name of the bacteria that causes botulism. Botulism spores are pretty much everywhere in the soil, on meats and vegetables. But it's not a big deal because they don't cause issues unless they have the right sort of environment. These little spores, they love places that don't have oxygen and are nice and moist. Right? So when we think about what a jar of canned food is, doesn't have oxygen and it's in a liquid that makes an ideal host for our little friendly botulism spores.

Speaker 1 ([06:36](#)):

And once they get into this sort of hospitable environments, then that's when they have the potential to grow into that active bacteria, which produces neurotoxins. So botulism can cause paralysis. It can cause your body to shut down and it can kill you guys. It can literally kill you. This is not a stomach ache for a day, right? It is. Botulism is the most severe form of food poisoning out there. You don't want to play with it. And that is why when we're canning, it's so, so important to follow the rules. And I get it. I don't like following rules either. I love to break rules, but when a rule is going to keep me from dying, then I'm okay with it for some reason, like I'm cool with it, it's fine. So I just want you to understand that I wholeheartedly promote you playing with that cookie recipe or cooking your roast a little different for Sunday night dinner or whatever you want to do in the kitchen.

Speaker 1 ([07:39](#)):

You be you. But I don't recommend venturing out on your own when it comes to canning. Even if your grandma did it, even if you've done it before, count yourself lucky if you got away with it before, that's awesome. And you might get away with it again, but you might not. And do you really want to look at all those beautiful jars of food on your pantry shelves and wonder which one could contain something that's deadly? Like, I just don't love that whole thought process. That stresses me out. So I would rather know that what I have can and what I put all that work towards is safe and I don't have to worry about it. So here's a few of the things that people love to do. Well not everyone, but some people love to do and they get very defensive over it. And here's the, here are some of the methods or the techniques that I would highly encourage you to avoid.

Speaker 1 ([08:38](#)):

Okay. So number one, there's something called oven canning where you put your food and stuff in jars and put the lids on and you bake it in the oven for a certain amount of time. It is not a recommended method that is safe to foods with. It's not going to heat the jars appropriately. It's not going to kill anything inside. So don't do it, like there are websites out there that'll show you how, but just click past them because it is really, really sketchy and very unsafe. Another option, that people really want to do so badly. And I've been there like I know of this tomato soup recipe that is out of this world and it has dairy in it. It has milk and cream and I know of a recipe, kind of a bootleg recipe, not in a book, but it tells you how to can it and as much as I would love to can it, I don't because it has the flat or excuse me, has the dairy in it.

Speaker 1 ([09:40](#)):

So dairy, flour, and fat like butter, coconut oil, a lot of fat. I mean a little trace amount of like coconut oil is not going to be a huge deal. But if you have a recipe that's fatty, those are not safe to can whether you're using a pressure canner or a water bath canner because the flour and the dairy can actually help protect and shield the botulism spores. So even if you're using a pressure canner, which is really good at killing botulism spores, you don't know if the flour and the dairy are protecting it. So it's always, always, always a good idea. Don't can those things don't can recipes that contain those things. Like an example would be chicken noodle soup. You can can chicken noodle soup. You just got to leave out the noodles so you can can the chicken and the vegetables and the broth with your pressure canner.

Speaker 1 ([10:33](#)):

And that's awesome. Just follow the recommended times and then when you're ready to eat it, pop it open, cook some noodles on the stove and mix it all together. That's perfectly fine. But don't put the noodles in the jars. Okay. All right. Number three. This one probably comes up the most. And people are very, very defensive over this one. Ask me how I know. It's called inversion canning. And a lot of people have grandmas who still do this and a lot of people have done this and have not died. But it's not a safe method. So inversion canning is where you, it's mostly done with jams and jellies. So you take your jam, you put it in a jar, you put the lid on with the ring and you flip it upside down and you'll leave it on the counter. And most of the time it seals because you maybe have noticed that sometimes if you put hot food in a jar and a canning lid on top with a ring, it'll suck that lid down and it'll look like it's sealed, right?

Speaker 1 ([11:30](#)):

A lot of people do this, but it's not sterilizing anything, right? It's really important that we keep things sterile if we're going to then put that little jar out on the pantry shelf at room temperature. So the cool thing is you can easily do jams and jellies the safe way without a fancy canner is, you know, you can grab an approved canning or excuse me, an approved jam recipe, like in the Ball Blue Book, or from the National Center for Home Food Preservation. Heat the jam, you heat the jars, you put the jam in the jars, you put the lids on and you just boil it covered completely with water in a pot for the specified amount of time. You don't have to have a special canner or a pressure canner or anything. It doesn't take that much longer. And then you don't have to wonder and you don't have to worry about the food going bad either and having a bunch of wasted jam.

Speaker 1 ([12:21](#)):

So just skip the inversion canning even if people on the internet tell you otherwise it's not worth the risk. Okay. The next one is trying to get away with not using a pressure canner for low acid foods. Right.

And like I said, there's some things that are perfectly acceptable to use water bath canning for. Water bath canners are cheaper, easier to find, they're easier to use. So most people just kind of want to cling to their water bath canner and see if they can get away without ever having to invest in the scary pressure canner. And you can do that as long as you're only canning high acid foods, things like fruits and tomatoes with some added lemon juice or jams and jellies or Apple sauce. You can can those things in a water bath canner all day long. No problem. But when you want to get into vegetables or broth, which is one of my favorite things to can, or meats or what was my other thing?

Speaker 1 ([13:22](#)):

Oh, like dry beans. If you want to make up some Pinto beans and have them ready to go at a moment's notice, those are low acid and you 100% cannot get away with water bath canning those items. That is very much setting yourself up for botulism, not worth the risk. So when a recipe says pressure can it, you got a pressure candidate and no, I, cause I know this question's gonna come up. Instant pots are not pressure canners. They are pressure cookers. Not the same, not a crossover. Don't do it. Bad idea. Okay. And lastly, making up your own recipes. Do it all day long in any other aspect in your kitchen. But don't do it with canning because when, let's take tomato sauce for an example. You have your ball blue book. It gives you the formula for tomato sauce that you will can in your water bath canner.

Speaker 1 ([14:19](#)):

But you have a bunch of extra peppers and a whole bunch of extra onions. And so you decide to, add way more onions and peppers and garlic than the recipe called for. The problem with that is that it changes the acidity level in that tomato sauce and you don't really know what it is now. So when you make tweaks like that, you're kind of putting yourself in unknown territory. Now adding things like more dried herbs or a little bit of sugar or a little bit of salt, that sort of tweaking is fine. That is not going to affect the acidity but changing big ratios of ingredients or you know, swap baking, big swaps like that, just skip it. Stick with an approved recipe and then you don't have to worry about it. So those were the big five offenders of the biggest unsafe canning methods.

Speaker 1 ([15:08](#)):

And here's the deal that this is the part that really concerns me the most about botulism. You won't know if it's bad. So if you have not followed the rules or the recommended steps, you might have a jar that looks just fine. Um, smells okay. Looks okay and you won't know like you don't know. Botulism doesn't always present itself as gross, fuzzy mold and rancid smelling food. It can be a little bit sneaky. So I know for me, because there are no outward signs, I don't want to have to worry about it. I just don't. And, and here's the good news. As long as you follow the rules, follow the ball Blue book, follow the national center for home food preservation, which is all available for free online, All the recipes. Canning is really safe. Just follow those rules. You use a pressure canner when they tell you to use the right amount of boiling time.

Speaker 1 ([16:06](#)):

It's very, very safe. Like we have never had an issue. We've never had someone gets sick or had any issue with canned food as long as we just follow the instructions. So yes, ultimately you're a grownup, I'm assuming so, maybe we have some teenagers listening, but most of you are grownups. You get to choose what you do in your kitchen, right? Ultimately, if you want to can roast beef in your water bath canner on an open flame outside and seal it with paraffin wax. That was another one I didn't mention. Don't do the paraffin wax thing. That's old school. Not a good idea. But if you want to do that, it's your

deal. Go for it. Right? But don't say I didn't warn you and I can't guarantee that it won't make you sick and you might have some spoiled food and who really wants to worry about those things, right?

Speaker 1 ([16:52](#)):

So just do it the right way. Give yourself a peace of mind and then know that canning is an absolute blast. You don't have to worry about any issues and food spoilage. It's one of my favorite homestead tasks and I highly encourage you, if you've been on the fence to add it into your repertoire of skills. Get on it, cause it is super rewarding and a definite thing to add that is going, that was very poetic. I definite thing to add. I think I'm going to go eat lunch as I'm recording all of these episodes is something you should add to your home set skills. How about we add, add that and call it an episode before I say anything else super intelligent. Alrighty. So if your head is spinning at all the details and numbers of canning, if you've Googled it, you're not sure who to believe, what to start with.

Speaker 1 ([17:38](#)):

Um, how complicated it needs to be. I love this topic so much. I have a whole ebook I created with all of the details, diagrams, charts and safety. Yes, all of the easy safety things you can do to can without headache. So we're going to drop the link to that over in the show notes. [Learnhowtocan/learntocan3](#) which is kind of a weird, a website address. So we'll just go click the show notes. It'll be easier, but you can get all the details and some bonus goodies as well. And that is it for this episode, my friend. Thanks for listening. Thank you to everyone who leaves reviews over on iTunes or their favorite podcast player. I really appreciate it, and it helps more people find this podcast and bring homesteading into their lives. So that's all for today. But we'll chat more in the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.