

# Calendar

## Limes So Crisp They Make Your Ears Ring

### *The Violence of Home Canning*

Joyce Boosey of Valley Center has been home-canning fruits and vegetables since she was a little girl. Now she's 72, so you might say she knows a thing or two about it.

While growing up in Las Vegas in the 1930s, she helped her mother can. "This was back when Las Vegas was just nothing," she says, "and we had to do it. After that, for a while, I didn't can. Then about 40 years ago, in Tustin, my neighbor canned all the time, and she was really the one who taught me. She had a peach tree, apricot tree, plums — just a mass of stuff. And I would get so that I'd go down to the wholesale market at 5:00 a.m.

#### LOCAL EVENTS

and things. And my husband was so proud of that full pantry, he gave it practically all away."

"Absolutely sterilized" jars is her primary commandment; you wouldn't want a home-canned good to be your last meal.

"You have to be so aware that botulism can happen. I do not care to have botulism around. I wash my jars by hand, not in the dishwasher, then hold them up to the light to be sure I got every speck. And you need to let them air dry. Can you imagine all the germs that are on your dish towel? Those germs are something and a half."

As for lids, "You never use a lid twice! Never! Boy! I mean, I'm violent on that."

The fruits and vegetables to use should be "ripe to almost-ripe." They should also be blemish-free, says Boosey. That's not because otherwise your jams or jellies will taste bad. "It's because they will be bad."

If it gels too much, Boosey knows why: "It was cooked too long or at too high of a heat." And if it doesn't gel enough? "Some things take two weeks to gel. But if it should have done it right away and didn't, it's usually because it was undercooked or you measured wrong."



Joyce Boosey takes a reading for a pupil

On the subject of adding commercial pectin to the natural pectin already in fruit, she is no less firm in her convictions. But here is one place where the science of canning shades into art. "With some I do [add it] and some I don't. It all depends." On what it depends she finds it hard to say. She will give these examples, however: "I use it in strawberries and also in bluebarb."

Bluebarb? Would that be blueberries and rhubarb?

"Yes. Blue. Barb." Perhaps her

own invention? "No, not that one." Her own run along the lines of strawberry margarita jelly and peach amaretto jam. "But you really got to know what you're doing when you use alcohol, or you'll have a little missile on your hands, because it's going to start fermenting."

The strawberry margarita took her 11 tries, she says. "Another time I did this great big gallon jar of lemons, with a clamp lid, and it was gorgeous. And I took it to a boutique to sell. A few days later the woman in charge called me.

"Joyce? This thing keeps leaking." A few days more and she said, "Joyce, I'm taking this lid off, because it's going to explode!" And when I got there I could see it working like crazy. But she saved it in time. And a lady bought it and was thrilled to death. That was after we gave it some air to breath."

And what kind of liqueur was in it? "Triple sec."

So the right proportions of alcohol, fruit, and sugar are...? Once again Boosey finds it "a hard one to explain." She thinks; she hesitates. "You get a feeling for it."

Told of a complicated recipe for pickles that specifies two weeks of tending, she counters, "My lime pickles take four days to make."

Would that be limes and cucumbers together? "You're thinking lime limes. These are pickling limes that you rinse and rinse and rinse and rinse and rinse. And then you rinse them again. And they make things so crisp, your ears'll ring."

Despite the incomparable tastes and textures, home-canning requires an outlay of time that many cannot seem to justify. "That's why I teach it over at Bell Gardens," says Boosey, "because it's dying out."

Carrot marmalade, dilly beans, tomatoes, and boysenberry jam have been featured in sessions past. Upcoming is spicy okra.

Her classes are billed as demonstrations, but Boosey says, "No! The people do it! They! Do! It! One gal said, 'Do I have to put those in the jars with my hands?' And she put them in the jars with her hands. It's really a hands-on thing."

"I just hope that at least a couple of them carry through with it and teach it to their kids."

— Jeanne Schinto

**Home-Canning Demonstration**  
**Wednesday, August 9,**  
**11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**  
**Bell Gardens**  
**30841 Cole Grade Road**  
**Valley Center**  
**Free**  
**Info: 760-749-6297**

**Local Events**  
*page 57*

**Classical Music**  
*page 70*

**Art Museums & Galleries**  
*page 72*

**Theater**  
*page 74*

**Pop Music**  
*page 79*

**Movies**  
*page 111*

**Restaurants**  
*page 120*