

Modern Preserves

Food preservation seems to be all the rage now. Last spring two books on the subject were published bearing nearly the same name: Eugenia Bone's *Well-Preserved* and Mary Anne Dragan's *Well Preserved*. Around the same time, a revised addition of local author Linda Zeidrich's *The Joy of Pickling* was released along with her new book, *The Joy of Jams, Jellies, and Other Sweet Preserves*. Kitchen stores are again stocked with home canning equipment and canning classes are being offered.

Last week I attended a class sponsored by the Portland Farmers Market and led by Master Food Preserver Cara Haskey. Haskey recently launched her business, Modern Preserves, with the goal of rejuvenating the age-old craft of home canning by teaching on the science, technique, and equipment for the modern epicure.

Long gone are the days of "putting food by" out of necessity, so in this modern world of eating by the season, why can? For Haskey, the answer lies in the food topic of this century: knowing where our food comes from.

Last summer, Haskey turned 250 pounds of farm-fresh tomatoes into salsa, pizza sauce, marinara, and chili. Her economist husband calculated that she spent about as much as it would have cost her to purchase the same quantity of organic canned tomato products from a grocery store, and that's without factoring in the energy cost and her time.

But saving money isn't Haskey's motivation. Her prime reason for canning local organic fruits and vegetables at their peak is to control what's in the food she eats, even when there's little time and her family is hungry for a home-cooked meal.

In class we made a simple vegetable stock and processed it in pint-size jars in a dial-gauge pressure canner. We learned that with a small investment and a little time, it is possible to stock up on homemade "processed" foods—without chemical preservatives—to enjoy throughout the year.

For more information:

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