



PRESERVE IT, DON'T WASTE IT: THE MONEY-SAVING POWER OF CANNING

CHALLENGES

- Food waste is a major global issue, with approximately 1.3 billion tons of food wasted each year. In the U.S. alone, nearly 30–40% of the food supply is wasted annually. In 2022, around 1.05 billion tons of food were wasted post-production—households alone accounted for 631 million tons, or about 60% of that total.
- To combat food waste, people are embracing home canning, but key challenges come with this desire:
 - » Canning can be labor- and time-intensive, especially for beginners.
 - » Proper canning techniques are required to avoid botulism.
 - » Processing food safely requires proper equipment and ample time to prep, cook, and process foods.

EXTENSION RESPONSE

- In 2023, about 31% of the U.S. food supply (out of 237 million tons) went unsold or uneaten; 63 million tons ended up as waste, accounting for roughly 1.4% of U.S. GDP.
- Extension agents educate home canners on proper canning techniques to avoid food waste and possible food-borne illnesses.
- In 2023 and 2024, Extension agents conducted vegetable canning programs with 738 participants in 18 counties.
- During these programs, Extension agents highlight the benefits of investing time in home canning versus buying from the grocery store. They explain how to save money by purchasing in-season produce in bulk from local sources like farmers markets, co-ops, or directly from farms—where prices are lowest and quality is highest.
- Agents also inspect participants' canners for faulty gaskets and use a master gauge to pressure-test equipment, ensuring it is safe and ready for use.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Cutting food waste through canning alone saves an average U.S. household over \$2,000 annually. By preventing premature decay and enabling long-term storage, canning plays a vital role in minimizing food loss at both the household and commercial levels.
- Canning combats food waste by significantly extending the shelf life of perishable foods—up to 1–5 years or more—reducing spoilage, preserving surplus harvests, and allowing off-season consumption.
- Home canning requires upfront investment in jars and equipment, but it significantly reduces the per-unit cost of fruits and vegetables compared to buying canned goods at the store—especially when produce is bought in bulk or grown at home. For example, canning home-grown tomatoes is a relatively easy process, making a quart of tomato sauce about \$2.56 compared to \$7–9 for a name brand sauce at the market.
- Canning encourages purchasing from local farms or farmers markets during harvest season, keeping more money in the local economy and reducing reliance on large agricultural corporations.
- Based on **738 participants** in 18 counties, with a potential annual household savings of \$2,000, the potential impact of this program in Mississippi could be **\$1.5 million**.



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M2480-06 (10-25)

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TAKING CARE OF WHAT MATTERS