

Ask the Agent

Q—How do I keep the white residue from showing up on my jars during canning?

A— This is a common challenge when canning with Flint Hills water. We simply have unusually hard water—caused by high levels of minerals that are common to areas with large amounts of limestone.

To reduce or eliminate the cloudy look of your canning jars, add a “splash” of white vinegar to the water in your hot water bath. If you already have jars that you canned with the cloudy film on the outside, you can wet down a dish cloth with a solution of white vinegar and water to wipe the outsides of the jars with.

If the liquid on the inside of the jars remains cloudy, that could be caused by several things. Using table salt instead of canning salt can lead to cloudy liquid because manufacturing companies often use anti-caking ingredients to improve the salt’s flow. Another cause for this could be from spoiled food. Re-check your recipe to make sure you followed the procedures closely. Check the source of your recipe as well—recipes dated before 1991 should be avoided. Cloudy fluid can be caused by over-mature starchy vegetables, such as corn.

Food Safety and Farmers Markets

My children and I have spent the past few Saturdays selling our excess farm produce and eggs at our small town farmers’ market. It is a fun way for the boys to raise some spending money and I have enjoyed visiting with neighbors and community members in the process.

As both producers and consumers of food, we need to make sure that safe food practices are followed carefully to prevent folks from unknowingly consuming contaminated food products. Unlike restaurants and grocery stores, farmers’ markets are often not held to as high a standard for food safety. It really depends on the management of the market and the availability of temperature-controlled equipment. However, farmers’ markets have an advantage over most other retail markets—the consumer can ask question about how the product was handled up to the point of sale. Customers need to be curious and discuss any food safety concerns with the vendors.



Dr. Londa Nwadike, Food Safety Specialist for K-State Research and Extension recently released food safety tips we should consider when shopping at farmers’ markets.

- 1) **Be observant:** Look at the vendor’s booth to see if they are following safe food practices. Surfaces, spoons, knives and other utensils should be clean. Those working in the booth should have clean clothes and hands, as well. Consider *how* they are keeping their hands clean between serving samples, for example.
- 2) **Look over the product:** Any produce being sold should be clean, look fresh, have no bruises, cuts, or other significant blemishes. The produce should be displayed off the ground or floor, as well.
- 3) **Is food kept cold:** Any produce that has been cut or peeled should be placed on or surrounded by ice. It should look fresh and cold. Meat, eggs, and cheeses should be in a cooler packed in ice. Again, the packaging should feel cold. The egg cartons should be clean. Check the eggs to make sure none are cracked. Milk should be pasteurized. Ask the vendor to confirm.
- 4) **Ask about the processing method:** Canned fruits and vegetables vary in processing methods based on their acidity level. Be familiar with proper processing methods and ask the vendor about what processes were used with their product.
- 5) **Is food kept hot:** Hot prepared foods should have a lid and be warm enough that you can see steam rising from the pan. Ideally, vendors are using thermometers frequently to check the temperature of their product for holding the food safely.
- 6) **Pack for your purchases:** Make sure you bring an iced down cooler for the cold products you purchase and an insulated bag for the hot products.

Modern Parenting Initiative—Meeting Needs in Our Local Communities

Today's generation of parents are facing pressures and situations that were not faced by previous generations and there are several social trends that are changing the tapestry of American families: 1) increased number of single parent families; 2) increased gaps between social classes; 3) increased mobility of parents; 4) limited employment opportunities in some areas; 4) shift from social focus on neighborhoods to the large community, as a whole.

With these social trends in mind, a group has formed in Geary County with representatives from 8 different agencies whose interests, in part, lie in helping families navigate these challenging times.

The efforts of this group, called the Modern Parenting Initiative (MPI), have resulted in the development of a 6-session parenting class designed to help parents develop stronger parenting skills. The primary program they will be using, Basic Parenting, was developed by K-State Research and Extension to help parents identify their existing strengths and work on areas that they self-identify as needing improvement. Each session will focus on one of the following categories of parenting skills: Care for Self, Understand, Guide, Nurture, Motivate and Advocate.

Care for Self: A parent who has the skills and resources to take better care of themselves, in turn,

have a greater skill at being able to provide their children with the environment they need to thrive.

Understand: Although every child is distinctly unique, all children follow a similar path of development. Understanding the uniqueness and the developmental stage of their children is important to successful parenting.

Guide: Guiding focuses on encouraging personal development in the midst of providing structure and enforcing expectations. Striking a reasonable balance in those efforts can be challenging for parents, especially if their personal experiences have not been positive ones.

Nurture: This is the single most important area of parenting skills. It lays the foundation for success in all the other areas.

Motivate: In this context, motivate includes the actions and behaviors parents display that promote the intellectual development in their children.

Advocate: When a parent advocates for their child, they are connecting with community resources (including schools and family service organizations) to ensure that the needs of their children are being met.

The first 6-session class is being offered beginning Tuesday, August 26, 2014. If you or someone you know would benefit from this class, call our office for



Durable Power of Attorney—Better Now Than Later!

Caring for an agent parent or an adult child with chronic illness can be physically and emotionally draining. The last thing you need to worry about is being without an advocate's voice when it comes to making medical decisions for your loved one. In order to insure that you can proactively advocate for them, your loved one should consider filing a durable power of attorney document with each health care provider they are attended by. With this document, a patient names the person they authorize to make health care decisions on their behalf. It usually is made effective when the patient is not capable of making decisions for themselves.

It can also be set up with a different specific standard that is applied. In the case of my own mom, I have the power to make decisions for her when she is incapable of making them on her own and when she is hospitalized (because of her medical conditions, she does not think clearly when she is ill.)

Because she has filed a copy of her durable power of attorney paper with her health care providers, I have the authority to make treatment decisions for her, including what medical personnel to hire or let go of. I also can make decisions about admitting her to medical facilities and institutions.

The durable power of attorney allows me to have full access to mom's medical records as well as be included in medical consultations she receives at different medical offices. Mom has also included me on her HIPPA form as a personal representative with confirms my right to access her information.

I may seem like I have too much authority when it comes to mom's health, but I have these rights on an "as needed" basis. When she is doing well, she goes to the doctor on her own and makes her own decisions. I only step in when she is ill and this document provides me with the legal basis to advocate for her health care needs. She and I have had intentional conversations about her view on the use of life support equipment in her care, about her views on organ donation, about what treatments she is comfortable with and those she does not want used.

When caring for another person, it is important that you know their wishes and comfort levels with various health care practices. It is also important that you are given the legal right to advocate for them. For more information and a blank copy of the Kansas Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care drop by our office and request Extension Bulletin #MF2816 rev.

Healthy Habits

Sharing Meals as a Family

As a young child, every meal was eaten at the table in our home, was most often enjoyed by the entire family. As my siblings and I grew up, sports, friends, and jobs pulled us away from the family dinner table. However, Sunday was the day that dad and mom would work in the kitchen to make sure we had at least this one family meal together each week. The phrase "family meal" likely brings to mind great memories for many of you, as well. But times have changed and family meals are no longer the norm, but rather a rare exception.

Recently, 40% of teens surveyed reported that they had meals with their family 3-6 times the previous week. However, 1/3 of those surveyed reported eating with their family 2 or fewer times the previous week. Another 14% reported that they ate NO meals with their family. A 2007 study revealed that only 65% of 15-year-olds in the U.S. reported eating the main meal of the day with their parents "several times per week" - one of the lowest levels of all wealthy countries surveyed.

Why eat together? There are many benefits to enjoying family meals including improved nutrition and positive family communication. Child-feeding specialist, Ellyn Satter, has identified 8 strengths of family meals:

- 1) Meals support food regulation and appropriate growth.
- 2) They make you a family.
- 3) Meals support good parenting.
- 4) They provide children with social & emotional support.
- 5) They connect us to our history.

- 6) Meals reassure children they will be fed.
- 7) They teach children to behave well in polite company.
- 8) Meals teach children to like a variety of foods.

If your family has not been in the habit of sharing meals together, it might seem difficult to know how to start. Talk with your spouse and family about your desire to have at least some of your meals together. Although it is easier to develop this habit when children are younger, your family will still benefit from the change regardless of the age of your children. Be flexible and make the meals family friendly by incorporating food that your family likes to eat. Some other steps that will help the change be more successful include:

- Turn off the TV and let phone calls wait until later. Make the family meal a priority.
- Include the entire family in the meal preparation—from making the food to preparing the table and making sure everyone has something to drink.
- Minimize mealtime rules. Instead, model the behavior you desire from the rest of the family.
- Use "conversation starters" - we use 'thumbs up, thumbs down' with each person sharing a positive thing about their day and a negative, too.

Each family is different, and their family meal environment should reflect that uniqueness. Creating the opportunity for a family meal may be challenging, but well worth it!

Source: "Everyone to the Table" (bulletin #MF-2784)

Sandy Proctor, KSU Extension Specialist, Maternal and Child Nutrition, author

Connecting with Kids

You might hear some rumblings from you school-aged children or grandchildren about their school meals and snacks this year. The changes that have been taking place in our school lunch programs have been occurring over the last few years in order to support better health for American children. What began with the school lunch and breakfast programs has now moved into additional food choices in our schools.

Last year, the United States Department of Agriculture, which oversees the Food and Nutrition Service, approved the adoption of new nutrition standards for snacks served in school. These new standards became effective July 1, 2014 and will affect school children starting this fall. Under the **USDA Smart Snacks regulations**, food sold on campus during the school day must:

- ◇ Be a whole grain-rich grain product, or
- ◇ Have as the first ingredient a fruit, vegetable, dairy product, or protein food; or
- ◇ Be a combination food that contains at least 1/4 cup fruit and/or vegetable; or
- ◇ Contain 10% of the Daily Value of a nutrient of public health concern in the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (calcium, potassium, vitamin D, or dietary fiber.)

There are also limits related to the food's content of calories, sodium, fat, and sugar, as well as new beverage guidelines.

The new regulations may seem too restrictive to your students, but they are a good move for the overall health of our young people. They offer your students the opportunity to make healthier food choices while maintaining the flexibility of some of the traditions our schools have, albeit limited. For examples, concession stands are still allowed, but cannot open up until 30 minutes after the end of the school day and can not be open past midnight.

As a parent or grandparent, **you can help** the school food service workers and classroom teachers by understanding the new standards, their purpose, and the positive impact they have on the daily food intake of young people. Some examples of alternative snack foods you may hear about include: peanuts, light popcorn, low-fat tortilla chips, fruit cups, and non-calorie flavored water.

Help your student appreciate and understand the value these standards have for them and their health. You might want to offer some of these snacks at home, as well.

Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

****Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register****

August

- 26 — MPI Basic Parenting Class, 6-session class open to any interested parent or guardian; registration information available at the Extension office, registration fee of \$60 covers materials and refreshments for all six sessions. Sessions are every Tuesday from 6:00—8:00 p.m. in the Kansas Room at the Devin Education Center; Pre-registration due by Thursday, August 21. Registration form is available online at: <http://www.geary.ksu.edu/doc55486.ashx>

September

- 5 — 14 2014 Kansas State Fair, Something for everyone at the State Fair, much of the 4-H exhibit and event judging takes place on Friday, Sept. 5 thru Sunday, Sept. 7. See what our Geary County 4-Hers have been working toward this past year and join us at the Fair!

‘Like’ us on Facebook for the latest news from **Geary County**

K-State Research and Extension, including health, wellness, and financial tips.

www.facebook.com/gearycountyextension



Geary County Office information: <http://www.geary.ksu.edu/>

K-State, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and US Department of Agriculture Cooperating.
K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

