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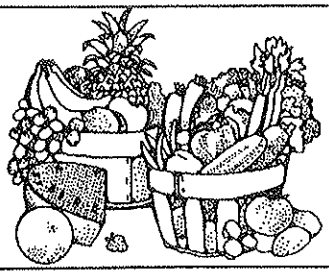

Nutrition and Food Sciences Fact Sheet

Cost of Home Canning

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There are both costs and benefits to home canning. Home canning may not save money and it may not be the best use of your time and energy. It does take equipment and skill. It must be done when the produce is available, and money must also be available. However, it can be a means of saving money; food is ready to use and convenient for planning and preparing meals, it can be customized to satisfy family tastes or special dietary needs, it may be a family tradition, and you can prepare wonderful specialties for gift-giving. Only you can make decisions regarding your time and energy, but the actual money cost can be figured.

Home canning can provide substantial savings if produce is homegrown, and jars and equipment are available from previous years. If the produce, equipment and jars need to be purchased, it does take a considerable one-time cash outlay. There are some ways to reduce these costs however.

To reduce costs for equipment:

-Buy jars and equipment at thrift stores, garage sales.

-Be sure equipment is in good condition; that jars are standard canning jars, with no nicks or cracks. Know prices of new equipment so you will know what a fair price is for used.

-Ask around—sometimes people are happy to give away unused equipment.

-You can buy equipment gradually over several years, and ask for equipment as suggestions for gifts.

-Borrow equipment. Be sure to return promptly cleaned and in good condition. Offer to exchange work for use of equipment. Do not borrow (or lend) pressure canners.

To reduce costs of produce:

-Plant a home garden—include costs of water, seeds, fertilizer, tools, etc. when figuring cost effectiveness.

-Go to farmers markets or pick-your-own fields.

-Other gardeners are often happy to have their extra produce used. Be gracious in accepting such gifts, and offer to help harvest or do other good turns for them.

-Set aside money over several months to be prepared for the canning costs.

Cost Analysis

To figure the cost of home canned foods

cost of produce _____

cost of lids _____

cost of sugar if added (2c. = 1 lb.) _____

cost of other ingredients _____

Total $_____for___jars = $___._ /jar _____

Other costs* approximately $.05/jar _____

Total cost per jar _____

For cost comparison, what is the cost of commercially canned product of comparable size and quality?

*Electricity at $.08 kwh = approximately $.03/qt.
Equipment, including jars, purchased new (spread over 10 years) = approximately $.02/qt.
(Cost estimate based on Family Economics Review, Spring '76, adjusted for 1989)

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