

# Live Free and Dig

## with the Littleton Garden Club

### *Canning and preserving*

THE LITTLETON COURIER,  
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BY SUSAN RETZ  
Littleton Garden Club

As a gardener, you harvest more than you can eat this week or next as those wonderful vegetables arrive in your

kitchen. In the long winter months when a store-bought tomato will taste like red mush, there are two solutions to keeping your produce longer: freezing and can-

ning. Freezing: you should have a vacuum sealing system. They take the air out of the package while sealing around food which keeps it

fresher. There are limits to how long items survive in a freezer. Early in the summer, you may have lots of basil, this is the basis for pesto. You can save basil in the freezer. Make the basic pesto recipe below without the cheese. I freeze the mixture in ice cube trays. Then they are packaged four, five, or six in a vacuum bag and labeled with the number of cubes and the date. Each cube is a serving. You can add the cheese when you use it. You can use other herbs like mint, parsley, or tarragon.

**PESTO** 2 cups fresh chopped basil leaves, stripped from the stems, 1 teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon ground black pepper, 1-3 finely chopped garlic, 2 tablespoons chopped pine nuts or

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walnuts, and 1 -1-1/2 cups freshly grated parmesan cheese.

I use a blender for all the ingredients or you can chop by hand. Bon Appetit!

Many other vegetables from the garden can be frozen, like beans, peas, and asparagus. They all need to be blanched before they are frozen. Wash off garden dirt, prep them for further use, and dip them in boiling water for a minute or two. Vacuum pack them, label them, and freeze them.

Canning is the traditional way to preserve produce. My family was from the Midwest, and we learned to can in our home in Washington, DC. I still process some of my garden produce by canning. The initial investment includes jars (quarts & pints), a large pot deep enough for a quart jar (with 2" of water above the jar), and a canning rack to handle up to 7 jars at a time. You need a tong, and a canning funnel. I like a wide-mouth jar with the funnel. Tomatoes are the easiest item to can; they give you fresher tomatoes during our long

winter. We also make sauerkraut from our cabbage, pickled beets and carrots. Plums from our fruit trees are lovely in the winter. As is jelly from our quince bush.

The first step in canning is to gather jars. Make sure you have new unused lids (wide mouth or regular). Wash empty jars, put them in your canning pot to sterilize them in boiling water. Lift them out, and place them upside down on a clean tea towel.

Before jars are sterilized have your vegetables/fruit prepared. Prepare tomatoes by blanching and peeling. Heat them for 5-10 minutes with a little water and some lemon juice. New canning lids warmed in a saucepan (3-5 minutes is plenty). Turn each jar up and ladle produce into the jar keeping liquid ½" from the top. Wipe the top of the jar with a damp cloth. Set the can lid onto the jar, place the ring lid on the jar tight and loosen it one-quarter turn back. You are ready to process the full-lidded jars in the same pot you sterilized them in. When you bring them out, set them on the towel. Check that all the lids

have been sealed. You can re-process any that don't seal with a new lid.

If all of this is too much, the food bank loves fresh produce. If you are game for this, you can enjoy your garden all year. Cheers!

For more information on our meetings or our club, visit: <https://www.littletonhgardenclub.org/>.