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EC949 Community Canning Center

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Nebraska
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
1933 U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Extension Circular 949

COMMUNITY CANNING CENTER

Home canning is being recognized over the entire country as an economical measure. It is a means of conserving the garden's summer surplus for winter use. All the surplus products produced by the many home and subsistence gardens cannot be conserved by home canning. To meet this situation community canning centers or small equipped plants are needed in some communities.

A community that is interested in setting up a community canning kitchen will want to keep in mind that canning in individual homes should be encouraged as far as circumstances make this practical. A canning program based on equipment owned in the home is more likely to become a permanent practice than when the homemaker goes to a community canning center.

A community canning program is planned merely to meet an emergency, so should not call for elaborate layouts with expensive equipment. Such a program should also comply with the local board of health regulations covering sanitation for sanitation in regard to the place, the equipment and the methods of work is especially important.

Some places have been able to set up a canning plant in a local church kitchen or school laboratory. An adequate supply of good water, sufficient light, both

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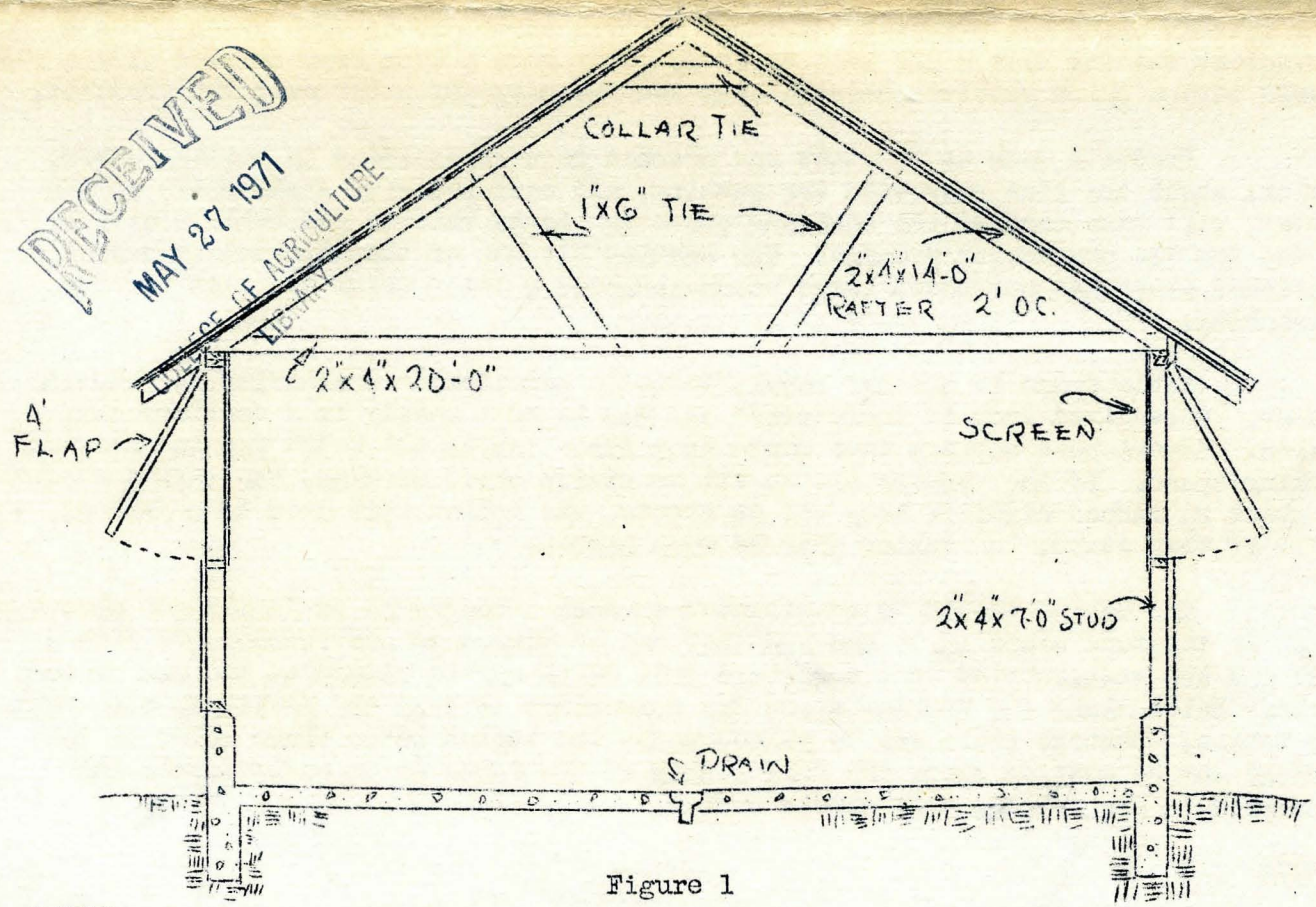

Figure 1

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natural and artificial, and toilet facilities are factors to be considered in selecting the location for a canning center. Some means must be provided of disposing all waste water and garbage in such a manner that flies will not be drawn to the canning center. A large garbage container and a drain to carry away waste water will help to meet this situation. A well screened building is also essential.

Figure 1 shows a cross section of an inexpensive type of building which lends itself to use as a community canning kitchen. The foundation wall should be about 18" high above the floor line to permit thorough cleaning without rotting out the sill and studs. If the corner where the wall meets the floor is rounded slightly cleaning will be more easily accomplished. The concrete floor should slope towards a center drain just enough to assure the water running to it. Too much slope will make the floor hard to walk on and might be the cause of accidents when the floor is wet.

The studding may be 2" x 4" material set two feet on centers. The outside should be boarded up part way as shown but flaps four feet high should be hinged at the top all around the building. These can be propped up when the kitchen is in use and will allow circulation of air as well as acting as sun shades on the sunny sides of the building. Screen wire should be nailed on the inside of these openings.

In some cases it has been found advisable to put some roof ventilators in the ridge to allow steam and odors which have collected under the roof to escape. If ventilators are used they should be completely screened. Good screen doors with strong springs are also necessary.

Adequate space is needed to receive, wash, and blanch or precook the products. One or two galvanized iron sinks about 15" x 2' x 4' will be satisfactory for the washing process. In the Nebraska reformatory school for young men there is a canning kitchen which has gradually developed over a period of several years where a convenient washing system has been devised. They have a long drum covered with a coarse screen which revolves about a long rod which sprays water over the products.

Products such as tomatoes and peaches require scalding in boiling water. A sink, about the size suggested for washing, and equipped with steam coils in the bottom, will take care of the scalding process. Large kettles and boilers will be needed for the precooking process. The canning kitchen of the reformatory school mentioned above has purchased large steam-jacketed kettles which are used for the precooking.

Table space is another requisite to be considered in planning the canning center. Galvanized iron is inexpensive and can be kept easily in a sanitary condition. Experienced workers have found that three tables 14' x 30" furnish adequate working space. If the workers are to sit on chairs while working, the tables should be about 28 inches high; if they sit on stools, the tables will need to be higher, while if they stand, the tables must be much higher.

The tables should be constructed in such a manner as to facilitate cleaning. If the tops slope in at one end they may be tipped up and flushed off with a hose and the waste carried into a garbage pail which may be placed at the end of each table. Holes along the working space are convenient to keep the peelings, etc. from the tables. Garbage pails may be placed under the tables below these holes or the garbage may be carried along the full length of the table by an endless belt and deposited in one garbage pail at the end.

Figure 2 shows a type of preparation table which is used in many places. This table is made so people can sit while they are preparing the produce for canning. The height would of course be changed if chairs are to be used rather than the attached seats or if people are to stand.

An endless conveyor runs down the middle of the table and as the fruit or vegetables are prepared they are laid on the belt and move along to the end of the table. Here they are removed by someone who takes them on to the next step. Oblong garbage slots cut into the table surface every four feet allow peelings, cores and all waste matter to be pushed off of the table top and out of the way. A metal chute leads from each hole to a garbage pail below. These cans may be pulled out and emptied whenever needed.

A sorting table may be made on the same general scheme as this preparation table. The construction of the table and seats is the same only there is no conveyor. A 1" x 4" on edge running lengthways of the table and dividing the top in the center allows a person sitting on either side to sort the fruit or vegetables in front of her without having them roll out of her reach.

All cross members should be solidly nailed so that the table will be rigid and will not collapse when a number of people are working at it.

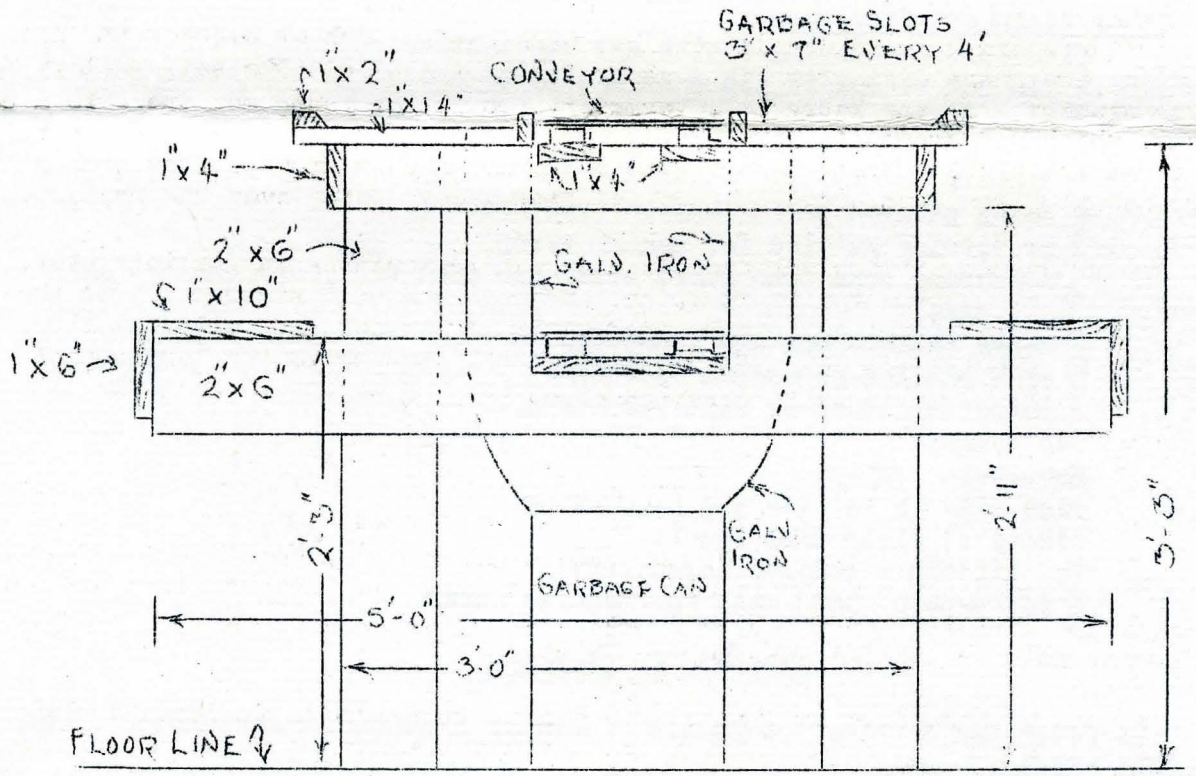

Figure 2

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Equipment

The type of equipment will depend in a large measure on the size of the plant. A small plant has an advantage over a large plant in that the equipment may be quite similar to the type used in home canning. A large canning center, however, will require much larger equipment.

Retorts or steam pressure cookers are necessary for the processing. Local Red Cross or other organizations are sometimes willing to purchase the cookers to be used in the canning centers. Sometimes individuals owning pressure cookers are willing to lend them to be used in the canning center.

Two large wash boilers with racks for preheating jars and cans for processing fruits and acid vegetables should be provided.

Stoves. A four-burner oil stove and a range should be sufficient for canning fruits and vegetables. The range should have a reservoir.

Containers. Glass jars or tin cans should be used as containers. New tops should be furnished every year for screw-top jars.

Rubber Rings. Use the best rubber rings obtainable. New ones must be used every year.

Other Equipment Necessary.

Circulars on canning fruits and vegetables.
1 tin can sealer if tin cans are to be used.
3 to 5 twelve-quart water buckets.
3 or 4 large dish pans.
2 dippers.
½ dozen pointed paring knives (good steel).
2 preserving kettles for making syrup.
3 measuring cups (one quart size, one pint size, and one half pint size).
½ dozen tablespoons and teaspoons.
3 or 4 paddles or wooden spatulas.
2 large colanders or wire strainers.
Can tongs.
Household scales.
Time piece - to time the processing.
Plenty of clean dish towels.
Pot lifters - ½ dozen large size.
2 fifty-pound lard cans for heating water.

Purchase of Equipment

The Extension Service can furnish names of respectable manufacturers of the equipment needed.

Suggestive Plans for Conducting Community Canning Programs

The first step necessary in the organization of any type of a community canning program is the training school held by the Food and Nutrition specialist of the Extension Service and the County Home Demonstration Agent, to train assistants in methods of organizing and conducting community canning centers. It is also important that some trained person has full time supervision at the canning center.

There are three different plans that have been used in various places. Each community will select the plan best suited to its needs:

Plan No. 1

A community canning plant is established for the purpose of canning surplus products which may be supplied to needy families. The work is done by workers who have lost their jobs and have not been able to secure employment. They are paid in canned products or given credit and then secure the products later as needed.

Plan No. 2

A community canning plant may be established for the purpose of teaching simple methods of canning to women of families who are on county aid.

Plan No. 3

A community canning plant may be established for the purpose of providing a place to can surplus products for those who cannot afford canning equipment in their homes.

Outline of Procedure for Plan No. 1.

1. For communities where there are a large number of unemployed.
2. The canning plant should be supervised by a trained person.
3. Surplus food comes from home gardens, farms, and subsistence gardens to be sent to the canning center or collected by a worker appointed for this duty.
4. Assign certain duties to each group of workers.
5. Laborers paid for their work in canned foods or given credit and then later given canned products as needed.

Outline of Procedure for Plan No. 2

1. Trained leader will conduct canning demonstrations one or two days each week to train women that are receiving county aid. These demonstrations will continue until all families receiving aid have been trained to can at home.
2. Have a special time assigned for each woman to attend the canning center.
3. Each woman may bring a limited amount of products on canning days and be given assistance in canning these products.
4. Keep a record of amount of food canned by each individual.
5. After all women in a community receiving county aid have been taught methods in home canning, anyone desiring to can products that are difficult to keep may be given permission to use the canning center at a scheduled time. Small groups might be organized to work together.
6. Those using the canning center may leave a portion of the food canned to pay for the use of the equipment. This supply of food may be given to some welfare group to be used for needy families.

Outline of Procedure for Plan No. 3

1. Some means must be provided for supplying jars to the women.
2. Community canning days should be held by trained community leaders three or four times a week during the peak season of surplus.

3. All women availing themselves of the opportunity to can at the canning center will be assigned definite days and hours for doing their canning.
4. The amount of canning any one woman can do in one day should be limited. This should give an opportunity for more individuals to use the canning equipment.
5. A portion of the canning done at the center may be left to pay for the use of the equipment.
6. A record should be kept of the amount of food canned by each individual each day.
7. A supervisor should be in charge of the canning center when it is in use.

(Prepared by Florence Atwood, State Extension Agent, Foods and Nutrition, and Ruby Loper, Extension Draftsman.)

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