

Colorado State University Extension

Food Safety Champion



Karen Massey (left), CSU Routt County Extension Agent and Linda K. Long (right), Routt County Master Food Safety Advisor

Linda K. Long

“History in Canning and Food Preserving”

(1948-present)

I have been canning with my family since I was old enough to wash the jars over a tub of water in our outdoor pit (~ 3 years old). It has been a family tradition, handed down for generations, as my Great Grandmothers both were Homesteaders in Routt County in 1896 and 1898. It was a way of life to preserve fruits, vegetables, jams and jellies, pickles, sauerkraut, and meats, when it was in season--usually in the Fall-- to serve family meals throughout the year. More than anything it was a necessary way to our rural lifestyle.

Even though electricity was introduced in 1911, it wasn't until the 1940's that *affordable* freezers and refrigerators were available to rural Routt County. So canning was one of three ways that we preserved our food, in addition to smoking/curing and dehydrating.

It was a tradition to gather the family during canning season. Grandmoms, moms, aunts, cousins, and even neighbors from the oldest to the youngest-- everyone had a job! We would usually gather in Grandma's kitchen, and it was standard to can as many as 20 bushels of peaches, 200 pounds of cabbage for sauerkraut, or to can a whole beef or elk, or 100 chickens. Then each family would take what was needed or they could use for the year.

Our lifestyle hasn't changed much--we still can together, putting up 500+ jars in any year. I have been entering canned foods in the Routt County Fair since the early 1960's, and we have 6 generations that have entered products in the fair.

I took my first judge's training in the spring of 1978, for Clothing, and then for Canned Foods. My first official county fair as a judge was in Moffat County in August 1979, for Canned Foods.

I really can't remember not canning! I remember the first year I actually canned by myself was in 1966 (age 21). Dusty and I were living for a short time near Seattle, WA, with an abundance of blackberries. I had to call home to Mom to make sure how to can them into jam. She laughed, but in the family operation, each had a job and you graduated with age and experience to the next step. Our "Master Canner" was Great Grandma, Grandma, or Mom. You had to stay on to learn and earn that "Master" ranking in our family. Today I am still 2nd in line!

“As times and methods changed, I took classes from Colorado State University to keep updated. I earned my “Master Canner” designation in 1995, and have kept up with additional classes ever since. It is now called “Master Food Safety Advisor.”

I started helping our Routt County Extension Agent teach canning classes and food dehydration in 1989, and started traveling to area counties, to help teach the motto “**Have Canner, Will Travel.**” I have helped in Routt, Grand, Jackson, Eagle, Moffat, Rio Blanco and Garfield Counties. I have traveled to CSU in Larimer County, and also to Adams County. (I don't have any idea how many miles I have traveled, or the number of people I have taught!)”

--Linda K. Long