

## Judging Home Preserved Foods for County Fair

Webinar  
June 19, 2013

Sponsored by:  
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## Objectives

- Overview of suggested guidelines
- Issues of quality and safety
- Focus on jams/jellies; pickled products
- Score sheets
- Q & A
- Certificate of participation
- Resources



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## Today's Resources

- **CSU Colorado Farm to Table Food Safety:**  
<http://farmtotable.colostate.edu/prepare.php> - located under Food Preservation
- **Downloadable documents:**
  - Slides handout
  - Brochure Sample-Preserving Food for Fair
  - Sample volunteer job description
  - Sample exhibitor memo
  - Recipe Resource list
  - Caution Labels
  - Score sheets (Samples)
  - Certificate of participation



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## Univ. of Florida Training Video

- **'Prize Winning Preserves'** – an 18 minute recorded presentation developed by University of Florida Extension. Provides tips for judging jams and jellies, including both good and bad examples:  
<https://connect.extension.iastate.edu/p5c4fole8k3/>

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## Pre-Planning for Fair

- **Establish clear guidelines/rules**
- Meet with judging team
  - Closed or open judging?
  - Will "taste" be included?
  - Recipe sources you will accept?
- Premium Book Rules
- Brochure- *Preserving Foods for County Fair*
- Memo to fair exhibitors (mail or email)



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## Sample Memo to Exhibitors

Greetings,

Our office has received your pre-registration for the \_\_\_\_\_ County Fair open class Department OL Canned and Dried Products. We are excited that you have decided to enter your home preserved food in the judging competition. Our goal is that you have a successful and rewarding experience. To ensure that your entry meets the standards for eligibility, please take the time to review the enclosed brochure *'Preserving Foods for County Fair'* and review the premium book rules for Department OL which are also enclosed.

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## Pre-Planning for Fair

- **Job Descriptions** - fair assistants/volunteers
  - Helps to identify duties ahead of time
  - Check-in: who will initially screen products?
  - Help educate consumers (fact sheets, etc.)
- **Goal:** to make exhibiting at county fair an enjoyable educational process!



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## Pre-Planning for Fair- Judges

### Attire/ Attitude/ Knowledge

- Well dressed and groomed
- Prompt, pleasant; smile
- Offer compliments and constructive comments
- Familiar with the products being judged
- Objective and as consistent as possible
- Recognize food safety issue
- Up to date - current techniques and trends



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## Pre-Planning for Fair- Judges

- Determine format that judges will follow
  - i.e. Score sheets (3 tier vs points)
- Allow time for feedback- written comments
  - Key part of the judging process
  - Start with a positive remark
  - Highlight strengths-inspire for future efforts
  - Written record-so can explain your reasoning



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## Safety is Primary Concern

### Top Priorities:

- The food **MUST BE SAFE!**
- Jar must show **TOP QUALITY** food
- **Appearance** and **Consistency**
- Goal- to minimize any possible risk to the judge from a product that may not be safe



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## Safety is Primary Concern

- The judging process involves:  
**Look...Touch...Smell.....Taste**
- Address aspects of **Safety** then **Quality**
  - Includes safety of product
  - And safety to the judge



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## Safety-Facilities

- Access to hand washing facilities for judges
- Clean-up materials on hand
  - If jar has broken seal and leaks
  - Possible spoilage or toxic microorganisms
- Surfaces need to be immediately cleaned and sanitized



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### Basics-Tested Recipe





**Not !!**




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### Basics-Tested Recipe

- **Recipe Source**
  - Follows safe procedures and processing times
  - List accepted sources in premium book, fair brochure
  - Add disclaimer to resource list- "cannot list every credible source available"
  - Extension fact sheets, Ball, USDA
  - Publish date of 1994 or later

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### Safety Factors- Labeling




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### Safety Factors-Labeling



- Recipe Name
- Recipe Source; edition; page #
- Date processed (current 12 mo period)
- **Processing details:**
  - Boiling water bath or pressure canned
  - Pounds of pressure (if pressure canned)
  - Altitude at which processed
  - Hot or Cold pack (if appropriate)
  - Number of minutes processed



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### Safety Factors- Opened Jars

- Judges should have the right to do this
- Reveals a great deal-without even tasting
  - Ingredients
  - Size and shape of the food
  - Odor of the product
  - Color, visual appeal





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### Safety Factors- Opened Jars

- Have procedure in place:
  - Should opened jars be emptied?
  - Returned with contents and warning label to exhibitor?
  - Ask for exhibitors to pick up product within certain "safe" time frame of judging?



**"This product has been opened and the contents should be discarded."**



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### Basics-What to look for

- **Proper seal** (good vacuum)
- **Container-standard size/shape**
  - No odd shaped containers
  - Jar sizes for which there are no USDA canning recommendations will NOT be judged

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### Basics-Lids

- Lids-approved 2-piece lid; heat sealed
  - No paraffin or Tattler lids
- Screw band-for fair entry-why?
  - If bumped-could lose seal en route
  - No signs of rust; clean, un-bent, easily removed
- No fancy padded lids-why?
  - Fabric overwraps or cozies-interfere with judging process





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### Basics-What to look for

- **Pack**
  - Headspace-according to USDA
  - Tightness of pack-good proportion of solids to liquids; neatly packed
  - No air bubbles
  - Visual
    - No floating pieces
    - Liquid covers all solid




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### Headspace-poor example




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### Judges in Action




- Voice your comments objectively and clearly as you move from product to product
- Department superintendent establishes rules regarding audience questions
- May limit questions to "AFTER" summary for each class of items.




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### Judging Sheets



- **Benefits**
  - Easy, systematic flow of reviewing each product
  - Safety and quality factors are clearly listed
  - Provides written record of what you assessed
- **Feedback**
  - Key role to provide positive comments and constructive feedback!
  - Include a tip for improvement



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### 3-Tier System

Characteristic- JELLIES	Well Done	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
<b>Container</b> Research tested recipe with source attached. Acceptable processing method used with correct altitude adjustment made. Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, method of preparation, processing method, altitude, processing time and date canned.			
Clean, clear glass standard canning jar, suitable.			
New lid and band free of rust, screwband clean, unbent and easily removed, jar and lid same brand.			
Vacuum-sealed.			
<b>Pack</b> Jar filled to appropriate headspace.			
<b>Color</b> Fresh, natural color representative of dominant fruit. Color uniform throughout.			
<b>Clarity</b> Free from cloudiness and fruit pulp (exception: pepper jelly). Absence of crystals. Free of bubbles and foam. Free of foreign matter (peel, seeds, etc.) and mold.			
<b>Consistency</b> Firm enough to hold shape. Tender, not too stiff or tough – "quivery". Holds sharp edge when cut.			
<b>Flavor</b>			

### Point System

Characteristic- JAMS	Points
<b>Container</b> Research tested recipe with source attached.	3
Acceptable processing method used with correct altitude adjustment made.	2
Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, method of preparation, processing method, altitude, processing time and date canned.	20
Clean, clear glass standard canning jar, suitable.	2
New lid and band free of rust, screwband clean, unbent and easily removed.	2
Vacuum-sealed.	2
<b>Pack</b> Jar filled to appropriate headspace.	10
<b>Color</b> Fresh, natural color representative of dominant fruit. Color uniform throughout.	15
<b>Clarity</b> Translucent and not "muddy" or cloudy looking. Absence of crystals. Free of bubbles and foam. Free of foreign matter (peel, seeds, etc.) and mold.	20
<b>Consistency</b> Soft enough to spread; not runny or overly thick; not gummy or sticky. Fruit pieces are tender and hold their shape. Pieces of fruit are uniform in size. Fruit pieces evenly distributed throughout container. No separation or layering.	25
<b>Flavor</b> Natural flavor of the fruit; not overcooked, overly sweet or tart, no scorched flavor.	10
<b>Comments</b>	

**6 factors = 20 pts**

### Basics-Jams and Jellies

- Appearance/Attractiveness**
  - Open jar; view appearance
- Color**
  - Fresh, natural color; uniform throughout
- Clarity of liquid**
  - Free from cloudiness and fruit pulp
  - Absence of crystals
  - Free of bubbles and foam
  - Free of foreign matter (peel, seeds, or mold)




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### Basics-Jams and Jellies

**Consistency (Jellies)**


- Firm enough to hold shape
- Tender and "quivery;" not too stiff or tough
- Stays in one mass when shaken loose from jar
- No separation of layering
- Holds sharp edge when cut



CSU Fact Sheet 9.303 Making Jellies  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09303.html>

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### Basics-Jams and Jellies



**Flavor-Jams and Jellies**

- Sugar saturated- generally low risk
- Reduced-sugar spreads**- shorter shelf life- greater risk of spoilage organisms
- Not overcooked; no scorched flavor
- Proper stage of ripeness
- Observe gel formation on plate

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### Basics-Jams and Jellies

- Taste is last step!**
- Natural flavor of the fruit; not overly sweet or tart



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### Point System-Example

Characteristic	Points	
<b>Container</b>	3	6 factors = 20 pts
Research tested recipe with source attached	2	
Acceptable processing method used with correct altitude adjustment made	3	
Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, method of preparation, processing method, altitude, processing time and date canned	2	
Clean, clear glass standard canning jar, suitable	2	
New lid and band free of rust, screwband clean, unbranded and easily removed	2	
<b>Pack</b>	20	
Jar filled to appropriate headspace	10	10
<b>Color</b>	15	15
Fresh, natural color representative of dominant fruit	15	
Color uniform throughout	0	
<b>Clarity</b>	20	18
Translucent and not "muddy" or cloudy looking	20	
Absence of crystals	0	
Free of bubbles and foam	0	
Free of foreign matter (peel, seeds, etc.) and mold	0	
<b>Consistency</b>	25	25
Soft enough to spread; not runny or overly thick, not gummy or sticky	25	
Fruit pieces are tender and hold their shape. Pieces of fruit are uniform in size	0	
Fruit pieces evenly distributed throughout container. No separation or layering	0	
<b>Flavor</b>	10	10
Natural flavor of the fruit; not overcooked, overly sweet or tart; no scorched flavor	10	
<b>Comments</b>		95 Total
Please chop the jalapenos smaller pieces, so that the spices are not predominant when cooked.		

### Point System-Example

Characteristic	Points	
<b>Container</b>	3	6 factors = 20 pts
Research tested recipe with source attached	2	
Acceptable processing method used with correct altitude adjustment made	3	
Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, method of preparation, processing method, altitude, processing time and date canned	2	
Clean, clear glass standard canning jar, suitable	2	
New lid and band free of rust, screwband clean, unbranded and easily removed	2	
<b>Pack</b>	20	
Jar filled to appropriate headspace	10	10
<b>Color</b>	15	15
Fresh, natural color representative of dominant fruit	15	
Color uniform throughout	0	
<b>Clarity</b>	20	20
Translucent and not "muddy" or cloudy looking	20	
Absence of crystals	0	
Free of bubbles and foam	0	
Free of foreign matter (peel, seeds, etc.) and mold	0	
<b>Consistency</b>	25	25
Soft enough to spread; not runny or overly thick, not gummy or sticky	25	
Fruit pieces are tender and hold their shape. Pieces of fruit are uniform in size	0	
Fruit pieces evenly distributed throughout container. No separation or layering	0	
<b>Flavor</b>	10	10
Natural flavor of the fruit; not overcooked, overly sweet or tart; no scorched flavor	10	
<b>Comments</b>		100
Really done and excellent flavor - I love the subtle cinnamon flavor!		



### Judging Issues-Tasting?

- Do NOT taste:
  - Low acid foods-canned vegetables, canned meats or seafood
- Products that SHOULD be tasted:
  - High acid foods-Jams/jellies, canned fruit, pickles and salsas...OK to taste IF judge feels confident that recipe is safe and correct processing times have been followed

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### Canning Fruits

- Well ripened-not overripe; firm- yet tender.
- Shape- well preserved; free of mushiness
- Liquid is clear/bright; suitable consistency
- Common problems:
  - Darkening
  - floating fruit
  - Under filled

Refer to CSU Extension Fact Sheet 9.347 Canning Fruits:  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09347.html>

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### Basics - Judging Pickles

WE CAN PICKLE ANYTHING!

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### Basics- Judging Pickles

**Pack**


- Appropriate head space
- Good proportion of solids to liquids
- Neatly packed
- Liquid covers all solids; no floating pieces

**Quality**

- Even color; no artificial coloring
- Free of discoloration, blemishes on food pieces

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## Basics- Judging Pickles




### Texture and Consistency

- Pieces appear plump and firm-not shriveled, sunken
- Pieces appear plump and firm-not shriveled, sunken
- Pieces cut uniformly; evenly distributed
- No separation or layering

### Quality of Liquid

- Clear, no unnatural cloudiness, free of bubbles



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## Basics- Judging Pickles



### Flavor


- Aroma
- Slice across: observe crispness, colors, attractiveness/quality
- Taste (decided by judging team)
- Flavor should be balanced

- Refer to CSU Fact Sheet 9.304 Making Pickles: <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09304.html>
- Making Pickled Peppers at Home 9.314: <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09314.html>



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Characteristic Pickled Products	Points
<b>Container</b>	20
Research tested recipe with source attached.	
Acceptable processing method used with correct altitude adjustment made; correct preparation procedures followed and type of pack (hot, raw) for processing method.	
Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, method of preparation, processing method, altitude, processing time and date canned.	
Clean, clear glass standard canning jar, suitable.	
New lid and band free of rust; screwband clean, unbent and easily removed.	10
Vacuum-sealed.	
<b>Pack</b>	10
Jar filled to appropriate headspace.	
Good proportion of solids and liquids; neatly packed.	
Liquid covers all solids; no floating pieces.	20
<b>Quality of Product</b>	
<b>Color</b>	
Even color. No artificial coloring except for a few specialty cucumber or apple ring pickles. Sauerkraut is off-white to light straw, translucent.	20
Color and translucency uniform throughout the jar and appropriate for product.	
Free of discoloration, blemishes on food pieces.	





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## Pickled Products-(Cont.)

	points
<b>Texture/Consistency</b>	20
Pieces appear plump and firm, not shriveled or shrunken. No internal holes in pickles.	
Food pieces cut uniformly. Evenly distributed throughout container. No separation or layering.	20
<b>Quality of Liquid</b>	
Clear, no unnatural cloudiness, free of bubbles.	20
Free of sediment and foreign matter (stems, cores, peel, seeds, etc.) and mold.	
<b>Flavor</b>	10
Balanced	
<b>Comments</b>	




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## Judging Categories

- Refer to '**Judging Home Prepared Foods**' Manual by National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP), downloadable at: [http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/nchfp/tech\\_bull.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/nchfp/tech_bull.html).
- **Fair Premium Books**- should be based on these guidelines- clearly stated per category
- Includes reproducible **Judges Score Sheets**



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## Tomato Products




**Basics:**

- Uniform pieces; firm but ripened fruit used.
- Pieces retain shape-yet well filled jars
- Bright color; liquid clear (some tissue ok)
- No separation of liquid
- Properly acidified

• Refer to CSU fact sheet 9.341:  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09341.html>



## Salsa





**Basics:**

- Mixture of high and low acid ingredients
- Recipe determines type of processing needed
- Ingredients- evenly distributed
- Pieces-uniform and bite-size
- No skins, cores or stems of tomatoes

• *Salsa Recipes for Canning*, NM State University Extension:  
[http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/\\_e/e-323.pdf](http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_e/e-323.pdf)

• *Salsa Recipes for Canning*, WSU Extension:  
<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/PNW0395/PNW0395.pdf>






## Low Acid Foods-Vegetables

**Basics:**

- Uniformity, proportion
- No fancy packs
- Free of excessive sediment, unintended particles, strings, fiber, stems, peels, cores and pits
- Free of large amount of trapped air


• Canning Vegetables CSU Fact sheet 9.348  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09348.html>

## Low Acid Foods- Meat, Fish & Poultry

**Basics:**

- Pack- space well used; good proportion solids to liquids
- Meat - not to be floured or deep fried
- Texture Excess fat and gristle removed
- Color -should be characteristic of cooked meat and seafood
- Raw packed meat chunks/strips- may retain a pinkish color
- Liquid- may or may not completely cover meat
  - No more than ¼ of liquid should be fat
- Minimal sediment
- Fish/smoked fish-no added liquid




## Basics-Dehydrated Foods

**Includes:**

- Fruit leathers
- Dried fruits or vegetables
- Meat jerkies


• Refer to CSU publications for safely preparing dehydrated foods:

- Drying Vegetables 9.309:  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09308.html>
- Drying Fruits:  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09309.html>
- Leathers and Jerkies 9.311:  
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09311.html>




## Dried Products

Characteristic	Points
<b>Packaging and Labeling</b>	
Research tested recipe with source attached.	
Acceptable processing method used; correct preparation procedures followed.	
Label clean, neatly placed and contains name of product, pretreatment used (if any), method of drying, drying time and date dried.	20
Appropriate size and material for product; airtight closure. <i>If in jar:</i> No cracks, chips or rust. Lid and band free of dents, rust, corrosion or dents; clean and easily removed.	
No foreign matter or visible moisture.	
Chronic Wasting Disease test results (deer and elk meat only).	
<b>Color</b>	
Characteristic of product.	
Color uniform throughout container.	30
Pretreatment, if done, appropriate.	





### (cont.) Dried Products

<b>Size and Shape</b> Pieces in exhibit are uniform in size and shape; leathers uniform in thickness. Pieces neatly cut; no ragged edges.	10	
<b>Texture</b> Pieces uniformly dry throughout. <i>Fruits, tomatoes:</i> Leathery and pliable. Chewy, not sticky or brittle. Free from cores and objectionable seeds or peel. <i>Vegetables:</i> Brittle and crisp; tough or cracking hard. Dry enough to rattle. <i>Herbs:</i> Pulverize or become like dust when rubbed. <i>Leathers:</i> Leathery yet pliable. Not sticky, crisp or brittle. Rolls without tearing or breaking. <i>Jerky:</i> Leathery; cracks but does not break when bent.	30	
<b>Flavor/Odor</b> Pleasant odor and flavor, characteristic of fresh food (except jerky).	10	

### Addressing Judging Issues



#### Processing Times

- Ball book has longer times than NCHFP; cannot disqualify
- Refer to Judges Summary Sheets for USDA processing times per product category
- Keep binder with summary sheets

### Sample Summary Sheet



Sweet Preserves Canning Summary Sheet for Judges  
USDA Recommendations\*

SWEET PRESERVES - BOILING WATER	State of Prep	Jar Size	Minutes in Boiling Water at Altitudes of				
			0- 1,000 ft	1,001- 3,000 ft	3,001- 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft	
<b>Jam and Jelly</b>							
The USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning (1994 revision) has the following recommendations for processing: jam without added pectin, jelly without added pectin, and jams and jellies with added pectin, to prevent spoilage:							
Prepared/jelly	½ inch	Half	Half Pint & Pint	5	10	10	15
Underfill (but clean, hot) jam	½ inch	Half	Half Pint & Pint	10	15	15	20
* The use of pectin or wax seals are not recommended for any sweet spread, including jellies. The use of an "Inversion" method, or turning filled jars over to stand on the lid for a period of time, in place of boiling water processing (or at all), is not recommended by USDA.							
There are five jam or jelly recipes in the USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning (1994 revision):							
Blueberry-Spice Jam	½ inch	Half	Half Pint & Pint	5	10	10	15
Pear-Apple Jam	½ inch	Half	Half Pint & Pint	5	10	10	15

\* Source: Complete Guide to Home Canning, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, US Department of Agriculture, Revised 1994. www.ionline.gov/preservation  
Downloaded by The University of Georgia, Athens, for the National Center for Home Food Preservation. Released by Elizabeth L. Andrews, Ph.D., Department of Foods and Nutrition, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, August 2003.

### Judging Issues ~~no~~ pH Testing!

- USDA guideline for home preserved foods:
  - pH (acidity) below 4.6 is "safe"
  - Problem- Inaccuracies- wrongly disqualified?
- Time consuming
- Why do -if a tested recipe is used?
- **NOT** recommended for fair judging!



### Wrap-Up/Summary

#### Bring "Judges Kit":

- bottle opener
- Wet wipes
- Paper towels
- Reference Books
- Summary Sheets-Notebook



#### Remember 3 Keys:

- Safety first
- Appearance
- Quality

### Resources: Tested Recipes

- *Ball Blue Book of Preserving* (1994 or later)
- *Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving* (2006)
- *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, 1994 or later). United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- CSU (or other University) Extension Fact Sheets: [www.ext.colostate.edu](http://www.ext.colostate.edu)
- Jarden Home Brands; [www.freshpreserving.com](http://www.freshpreserving.com)
- National Center for Home Food Preservation [www.uga.edu/nchfp](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp)
- *So Easy to Preserve*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. c 2006. University of Georgia Extension



## Additional Resources

- Guide-Judging Home Preserved Foods. University of Georgia. [http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/nchfp/tech\\_bull.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/nchfp/tech_bull.html)
- **'Prize Winning Preserves'** 18 minute recorded presentation developed by University of Florida Extension. Provides tips for judging jams and jellies, including both good and bad examples: <https://connect.extension.iastate.edu/p5c4fole8k3/>



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## Additional Resources

**CSU Colorado Farm to Table Food Safety:**  
<http://farmtotable.colostate.edu/prepare.php> under Food Preservation

### Downloadable documents:

- Slides handout
- Certificate of participation
- Sample volunteer job description
- Sample exhibitor memo
- Recipe Resource list
- Caution Labels
- Score sheets (Samples)
- Brochure Sample-Preserving Food for Fair



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## Certificate of Participation

- Download; print certificate for your records
- Not an official document and not required in order to judge at county fair
- Purpose of webinar has been for education only - not a certification



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