

**Seasonal Eating**  
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**Holiday Gifts from the Garden**  
**September 2021**

The summer and fall garden brings an abundance of produce. Sometimes it's hard to use it all in your meals. One option is to can or dry the produce to give as holiday gifts at the end of the year. But you have to plan ahead!

The best canned items to give as gifts are soft spreads (like jams and jellies) or fruits. These are acidic products that can be safely processed in a boiling water bath canner. The acidity makes them safe from the risk of botulism. Acidified products like pickles, relishes and tomato products carry more of a risk of botulism as they must have the proper ratio of acid to the low acid vegetables used. Always be sure to use a safety tested recipe from sources like USDA and Extension when canning to make your foods safe to eat and give. When canning acidified products, for yourself or for gifts, do not alter the ingredients. Also be careful not to use older recipes that may have been handed down or recipes on the internet that are not tested.



While you can't use your creativity in the recipes, you can turn your jars into spectacular gifts with decorations on the outside such as fabric covers for the lids, decorative labels and ribbons. Make a basket with your favorite jam and a loaf of homemade bread or give a special serving vessel and/or utensil with your canned item to serve it up in style. Try to always include the recipe source and how you processed your product to ease your recipient's mind about the safety.

Right now, peppers are flooding the garden so it's a good time to make pepper jelly. The recipe below is from the "So Easy to Preserve" book from Georgia Extension. This a great resource for any home canner (and makes a nice gift in itself). The jelly is a beautiful green color for the holidays which makes it a great gift. It will have a very loose set, so it is not jellied where it holds its shape. I used five medium size jalapenos which was just about right in the heat department. If you like it really spicy you can use serrano peppers or if you like it less spicy use 4 smaller jalapenos. Be careful not to use too much food coloring or it can make it an unappealing neon green – I added about 6 drops of green food coloring. My favorite way to use pepper jelly is to pour it over a block of cream cheese for an appetizer with crackers. The cheese tones down the jelly and makes a great combination of creamy, sweet and spicy and the green color just adds to the holiday festivity.

For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at [bedford.tennessee.edu](http://bedford.tennessee.edu) or if you would like to learn more about preserving gifts, join us September 17 at 10:00 a.m. on zoom. Look at the Extension Explores page under the family programs tab for more information to register.

## **Pepper Jelly with Liquid Pectin**

(Tested recipe from “So Easy to Preserve”)

4-5 hot peppers, cored and cut in pieces  
4 sweet (bell) green peppers, cored and cut in pieces  
1 cup white vinegar  
5 cups sugar  
1 pouch liquid pectin  
Green food coloring

Sterilize 5-7 half pint canning jars by boiling for 10 minutes. Prepare lids as directed on package. Put half of the peppers and half the vinegar into blender container; cover and process at liquefy until peppers are liquified. Repeat with remaining peppers and vinegar. Combine liquified pepper/vinegar mixture and sugar in a large saucepot and boil slowly for 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Add pectin and put back on heat to boil hard 1 minute. Skim foam off the top and add a few drops of green food coloring. Ladle jelly immediately into hot canning jars, leaving  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process 5 minutes in a boiling water bath.