



Live Farm Fresh, Without the Farm

Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 19 How to Use a Steam Juicer

Show Notes: www.LivingHomegrown.com/19

This is the Living Homegrown Podcast, episode #19.

Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast, where it's all about how to live farm fresh, without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, national PBS TV producer and canning expert Theresa Loe.

Theresa: Hi there everyone and welcome to the Living Homegrown podcast. I'm Theresa Loe. This podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without a farm through artisan food crafts, like canning, preserving and fermenting, small space food growing so you can have home grown produce right at your finger tips, and small space critter keeping, everything from chickens to goats and just living a more sustainable lifestyle.

If you want to learn more about any of these topics or my online canning courses, visit my website LivingHomegrown.com.

This week's episode is all about one of my favourite tools in the kitchen and that is a steam juicer. I'm going to give you the whole scoop about what this tool is and I'll explain exactly how it works and why I think you may just want to get one for your canning, syrup making, juicing or anytime you have a bumper crop of fruit or every tomatoes that you want to process in a really simple way.

So first, let me just back up a little bit and say that for for the last 23 years I have been preserving on a really small scale on my homestead which is just 1/10 of an acre in Los Angeles. So I have always preserved small



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batches of food. Now occasionally I would get a big bumper crop of fruit from a friend with a fruit tree, or when all of our apples came on I had a bumper crop of my own. But for the most part, I didn't do mass amounts of fruit at any given time. But all of that changed for me a few years ago when my family bought this 14 acre farmstead up in Northern California. And we have over 65 heirloom fruit trees there. And so my whole style of canning really changed and had to go into overdrive because I started putting up huge batches of produce at a time.

Now I still put up small batches in my own backyard, but when I'm up at the farmstead I'm doing large scale canning. And that is why my new favourite tool is a steam juicer. Now before you stop and think well okay, I don't do mass producing so I don't need a steam juicer. Well that's what I thought too but I actually now use my steam juicer for my small batches as well. So don't tune out yet because you may still want to get one.

I never really felt I needed a steam juicer before because I just thought they were great for massive quantities of fruit. But now after buying two of them, I have one here at home and I have another one up at the farmstead, I now realize that I should've bought one a long time ago.

A steam juicer is just a really great way to juice either a large or a small batch of produce. And that produce can be really just about anything. It can be berries, plums, peaches, apples, grapes... and even tomatoes! And later you can use that juice to make jelly or liqueur or even wine. And you can can it up or you can freeze it. It gives you a whole slew of possibilities.

Now there are many different ways that you can juice your fruit or juice your grapes or even your tomatoes. But what I like about the steam juicer is it makes it so easy. So let me explain exactly what a steam juicer is in case you've never seen one before. A steam juicer is like a low tech way to extract the juice from fruit and vegetables.

It's simply a stack of nesting pots that sit on top of your stove. And it has a tube for pouring off the juice that you steam out. Now it has three parts. Okay, the top is like a giant colander. It has holes in the bottom so that



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steam can come up through and this is where you place your fruit. So the holes allow the steam to penetrate and it's a large colander — it holds about 11 quarts. And the best part is you just add the fruit. You don't have to peel or slice it. You just place whole fruit in there.

And then the middle section has a tube coming up through the centre with a hole and that allows the steam to rise up through. It's like a giant pot with a hole in the middle and reservoir to collect the juice that steams off. It also has this little pipe coming out of the side with a tube which is where the juice is siphoned off. And there's a little clip that prevents the juice from coming out of that tube until you press it and release the juice. So the centre section collects all of the juice and is where you siphon off the juice.

Now the bottom pot, the third pot, is the one that sits on top of the stove and it's filled with water. And it's where you are going to be creating the steam.

So all three of these pots just sit on top of each other. You have the steam on the bottom, you have the reservoir in the middle that collects all the juice and then on the top you have this giant colander that sits on top and holds all of the fruit or tomatoes or whatever it is that you're juicing. And if you would like to see photos of exactly what one of these things looks like be sure to visit my website because in the show notes I will link to photos of everything. I have a whole blog post explaining exactly how this works and what it looks like.

So you can get those show notes at LivingHomegrown.com/19, that's slash 1-9. So that's what a steam juicer looks like and here are the advantages of it.

First of all, you can do large quantities. You can do quite a bit of produce at a time. But because it's so easy to use I now use it for my small batches as well. In fact, I wish I had bought one a whole lot sooner. I just in my head always thought these things were good for large batches, never thought I would need one. And in the past when I was making jelly or if I wanted to extract juice from plums or anything like that, I would boil down the fruit in



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a pot and then strain it. Well this kind of does both of those things in one step. So I was actually doing a lot more work for one small little batch. With my steam juicer, it doesn't matter whether it's a large batch or a small batch, it does it all for me in one step. So now I use it for no matter how large or small of a batch. If I need juice I use this and it's so much easier.

Another advantage of a steam juicer is that it's very little preparation. You don't even need to peel or cut or pit or de-stem anything. You just wash it and place it in the top colander. So that means grapes are just thrown in on the stem. Peaches, plums, you don't peel them, you don't pit them. You put the whole thing in the top of this contraption and it will take the juice out for you. Another advantage is that you get really clear juice. The steam does an excellent job of extracting all of that juice and producing a really clear liquid that is almost completely free of pulp. If you need to you can always strain it to get a super clear liquid, but for the most part you get really clear juice without having to do anything else.

Another advantage is that it's relatively fast. I mean yes, you have to let it sit and steam for sometimes an hour to an hour and a half. But for the amount of produce you can fit in there it goes pretty quickly. And it is certainly easier than cooking down all that fruit and straining it through a cheese cloth or a jelly bag which is what I was always doing in the past.

Also, it's a little bit concentrated. So due to the fact that you're only getting juice with very little fibre and you're steaming off some of the water, you wind up with a very concentrated juice which is nice when you want to make a really flavourful jelly.

And the last advantage I will tell you is that it's really easy, easy, easy to use. I use my juicer while I'm in the kitchen doing other things. Like I'll be making jam or baking or fixing up some dinner and I fill it with the unpeeled fruit, I turn on the flame and just keep an eye on it for 45 minutes to an hour or so until it's done and that's it. I'm not touching it otherwise. It's just sitting there doing its thing. And the result is a really clear juice.



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So now you might be thinking okay, so I juice all this stuff, what am I going to do with all this juice? Well I think a juicer is great for making jelly, but really the possibilities are completely endless. I know people who have used steam juicers to make juice for liqueur, cider, even wine. So the finished juice is just unsweetened and it's ready for anything.

Now I usually I take my juice and I freeze it to make jelly later. I like to do the stages of jelly making. So I make all the juice one day and another day I'll come back and make the jelly. but it also works great for making tomato juice. And you know that if you grow tomatoes and you end up with this big bumper crop that it can be a little overwhelming — What do I do with all these tomatoes? You certainly don't want them to go to waste. And one of the things that you can do is juice it using a steam juicer.

When I'm all finished making my juice with whatever it is — plums or tomatoes or grapes — I let the whole thing cool off. And the colander part is filled with skins and pits and some pulp from the fruit. And after that is cooled off I give that to my chickens and they go nuts for it. So really using a steam juicer is a great way to use up everything. Nothing goes to waste. And what's left over after the chickens dig through it goes into the compost pile. So it's a great way to use up every bit of your fruit or produce. And like I said it's so perfect for preserving in stages. And that can be a really big time saver. If you juice it one day, freeze it, and then weeks later you can defrost and make your jelly or your syrup or whatever it is you want to do with that juice.

Now one question that usually comes up for people when I talk about the steam juicer is what is the difference or benefits of a steam juicer versus a mechanical juicer and which would I recommend someone using, one versus the other. Well it kind of depends on what it is you want to use your juice for and how much produce you have to process at any given time.

So let me do it this way and sort of compare a steam juicer to a mechanical juicer. So a steam juicer extracts the juice by heating the cells of the produce until they burst. And then the juice just trickles out and the pulp is left behind. And it produces a really clear liquid and it creates a more concentrated juice. Now due to the fact that it's pure juice with less



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finer and you're steaming off some of the water you get that concentrated juice. It is not labor intensive. And although the steamer needs to be supervised you're not actively doing anything but sitting around and waiting for it to be done.

Now a mechanical juicer extracts by breaking the cells through crushing or grinding the produce. And this produces a less clear liquid because some of the pulp is in that liquid. However, it offers more nutritional value because of that fibre and the fact that the pulp and the juice have not been heated. It also requires you to actively process the produce through the juicer. And this is not an issue unless you're doing huge quantities. Putting the small batch through the mechanical juicer is no big deal.

So in case you missed that, heated juice is a little bit less nutritious. So yes, using a steam juicer is a little bit less nutritious than a mechanical juicer. And this does make a difference if you want to drink the juice raw. You do lose a little bit of the health benefits by heating the fruit. And this is because the heat destroys some of the vitamins and some of the enzymes in that fruit. So for the nutritional benefits of a raw juice, a mechanical juicer is the way to go. But if you're using that juice in a heated recipe, like for jelly or you're going to be making syrup, then it doesn't matter if you use a steam juicer or a mechanical juicer because you're heating it anyway. And a steam juicer is easier and faster.

So I hope that helps you understand the difference. Basically if you want to make a juice that you're just going to be drinking and you want all those nutritional benefits then go with a mechanical juicer. But if you're doing anything where you're going to be heating that juice to make jelly or to make syrup or anything like that, then absolutely go with the steam juicer because the steam juicer will give you something that is fast and easy and a little bit cleaner. It just takes some of the steps out of it. I hope that helps.

Now, let me give you a few bonus tips now that I've been using the steam juicer for a few years now. Let me give you a few bonus tips about what I've learned. Some of these things I've learned the hard way. [laughs] So the first one, tip #1, is be very careful because the juice is very, very hot.



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So you have to be super careful when you go to siphon that juice out into jars. And I am speaking from experience here, I now wear over mitts when I'm doing that because sometimes that juice will splatter and it really hurts when that hot juice hits your skin.

The other option if you're going to be freezing it and this is what I usually do is I let it cool down in the juicer before I try to remove it. So I am going to be putting it into jars, letting those jars cool and putting them into the freezer for later so I don't have to siphon it out hot. But if you need it hot because you're going to be immediately be making something with it just be really careful because that juice is piping hot from the steam.

The second tip I can give you is do not stir or press down on the fruit in the top if you want a clear liquid. Because if you do it makes all the pulp and the skins fall through the colander and go into your juice. And it's really tempting when you see all of that fruit up there to want to squish or press it to get that last little bit of juice. But if you do, you're pressing all of the pulp through the colander holes and you end up messing up that really clear liquid that you had. Trust me, I know, I've done it myself! Just don't touch the fruit in the top, just let it sit and drip. Don't push or press on it and you'll still get this really, really clear liquid in the bottom.

A third tip is to use marbles. And I know that sounds odd. This is something I've been doing since I was a little girl because my mom always would put marbles in the pans when we were using a water bath canner. So let me explain why. Whenever you use a steam juicer you have to keep your eye on the water level in the bottom section because you don't want it to boil dry, right? it's boiling and steaming the whole time and you want to make sure it doesn't run out of water. But this can be kind of difficult when you're actively using it because of the heavy pots on top you can't see into the bottom section to see how low or high the water level is. So to solves this problem I keep a few glass marbles in the bottom pan. And that way when the water level gets really low those marbles they start to rattle around really loudly. And that lets me know that the water level is getting too low. It's a really low tech way to know if you need to add water without having to stop and lift everything off.



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Now that said I have very, very rarely ever had to add water in the bottom pan. And the trick is, this is going to be tip #4, the tip is to not blast the heck out of it with the flame on your stove. you can keep a medium flame and just keep a nice steady steam and that's enough. If you boil the heck out of it on the bottom you can run out of water before you're finished. All you need is a steady steam and you can do that with just a medium flame. So you don't have to have a full blown flame the entire time, the whole 45 minutes or hour that you're going to have it on the stove. You don't have to have it blasting. A medium flame is enough. So by doing that, I rarely, rarely have ever had to add water in the bottom. But just to be careful, I keep those marbles in there so I know if it starts to get too low.

So now that I've talked about the steam juicer and now you're thinking, okay, I want to get one of these things, I want to give it a try, where the heck do I get a steam juicer? Well you can get them just about anywhere. You can get them on the Internet, or a speciality cook store. Honestly? I got mine from amazon and that's because I have free prime shipping. But they are available all over the place. They're just not very popular because I think most people think like I did that you need mass quantities of fruit to make them worthwhile.

The price range for these things can range anywhere from 50 bucks to 180 bucks depending on the quality to the type of metal they are — stainless steel versus aluminium. Or their size, or even if they have a clear glass top or not.

Now I have bought the cheapest one and I have bought the most expensive one. They both work. You don't have to buy the top of the line model in order to get the steam juicer to work. The cheap one works great. Now, which one do I like better? Well, I like the more expensive one. Mostly because the stainless steel heavy pots sit really nicely on top of each other. There's no tipping or wobbling. I feel they're really sturdy. But my favorite feature of the more expensive models is the clear glass top and that means you can look down inside and see how the fruit is doing. If it's cooking down well enough or if it's almost done without having to lift the



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top and let all the steam out. So I really like that clear glass top. But it is absolutely not necessary. You don't have to have it, it's just a nice fancy feature. The cheaper less expensive models, the aluminum ones work great. So don't feel that you have to go buy the really expensive ones.

The lighter weight models, they do seem to lose a little bit more of the steam around the edges. They don't fit as nicely on top of each other so in those cases you may have to add more water part way through but if you have marbles in the bottom you'll know when that time comes up. So you don't have to buy the most expensive model. Don't feel you have to do that.

I absolutely love my steam juicer. I use it all the time. It gives me a way of doing tomato juice really quickly and really easily while I'm doing other things in the kitchen. It's almost like multi tasking but I'm really not even doing anything. I'm just in the room with the steam juicer doing other things like baking bread, or making dinner. I just love it. And I wanted to tell you guys about it. There's no particular brand that I think is better than the other. You can just google steam juicers. Or you can go to my website and look at the photos. I'll have links, information for you if you want more information on where to get them. It'll be in the show notes for this episode.

So just go to LivingHomegrown.com/19, that's slash 1-9. Everything will be right there for you. But in the meantime, I hope you'll think about getting one of these things. It has certainly made life a lot easier for me when I get a bumper crop even here in my little 1/10th of an acre. But boy oh boy up at the farmstead? I could not live without this thing. I can do everyday do several batches of plums when our plum trees come on and then that gives me all this juice later for making jelly and syrups and all kinds of plum liqueur. It's just been fantastic and saved me countless hours. So I just love this thing. And I think you will too.

So that's it for this week. Thanks so much for listening today. I hope you found this information valuable and be sure to head over to the website so you can see photographs of exactly what one of these things looks like. I think that will really help. Just keep working towards your food choices this



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next week that are local, seasonal, delicious and homegrown. See you next time everybody!

Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown podcast. Visit LivingHomegrown.com to download Theresa's free canning resource guide and find more tips on how to live farm fresh, without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown podcast.