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## **Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 45 The 3 Life-Enhancing Benefits of Canning Food (And How You Can Harness Them)**

**Show Notes: [www.LivingHomegrown.com/45](http://www.LivingHomegrown.com/45)**

This is the Living Homegrown Podcast, episode #45.

**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:** Hey there everybody and welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast! I'm your host, Theresa Loe. And this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without the farm which just means that we talk about how you can have a more flavorful, organic lifestyle even if you don't have a lot of space. And we do that by discussing artisan food crafts like canning and fermenting, growing your own organic food, raising backyard critters like chickens, and just ways to live a more sustainable and seasonal lifestyle.

If you want to learn more about any of these topics or my online canning and preserving courses just visit my website [LivingHomegrown.com](http://LivingHomegrown.com). Now before I dive into today's topic I gotta tell we're opening the doors to my Canning Academy in just a few weeks and holy cow it has been so crazy around here! We've been in the process of moving my entire online school to this new location and we've been spiffing up the place and you know technology it can be this massive undertaking. So I've been revamping the content also at the same time within the Canning Academy to make it top notch and you know that know that feeling when you're about to throw a



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party and you're racing around the house to make sure everything looks okay before the guests arrive? Yeah well we've been in that mode for the last couple of weeks and we will be for the rest of March. But it's really got me excited about the upcoming canning season and I can't wait to dive into spring and summer with all of you. I think it's going to be a great flavorful year.

So in celebration of the new home for the Canning Academy course I've been putting together a lot of great free content for all of you. And it doesn't matter if you buy the Canning Academy program or not you can still get all the great information about canning over the next few weeks either on my website or in this podcast or via some email blasts when the Academy opens later this month.

Now the best way to make sure you don't miss out on any of this free information is just to sign up to be notified about the Canning Academy. And it doesn't cost you anything to sign up and you can of course unsubscribe from the Academy list at any time and in fact it actually won't even affect you being on my newsletter that's a separate list.

But you can sign up for the Academy list in one of two ways: Either go to the show notes for this episode number 45 and there'll be a Link there to sign up or the easiest way to sign up is just to text me. And I know that sounds weird but it's this new feature that I've set up where you can text to sign up on the list and it's super easy. All you do is you text canfood all one word no spaces canfood to the number 44222 and by the miracle of technology I will automatically text you back. And I say me because I wrote it. I will automatically text you back and help you get signed up it's super easy and boom you are sure to get all of invaluable free canning information that I'll be dishing out over the next 3 weeks.

Now remember all of this is free and my goal here is just to get you as pumped up and inspired about canning this season as I am. So if you're new to canning be sure to stick with me over the next few weeks cuz I definitely got you covered I'm going to be going over a lot of really great



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beginner information with some insider tips so it's good stuff. And when you're on this list it'll really help you dive into canning with confidence so I just want to get that out of the way especially for you newbies because I don't want you to miss out on any the goodies I'm going to be sharing.

So either go to the show notes [LivingHomegrown.com/45](http://LivingHomegrown.com/45) or just text the words canfood all one word to 44222. Okay I hope that makes it easy for you that's that's my goal, make it easy to sign up.

Alright so let's dive into today's topic which is the three life-enhancing benefits of canning food and how you can harness them for yourself. Now here's the thing most people think of canning food as a way to save or preserve a bountiful harvest and it totally is but it is so much more than that. And I want to talk about the other benefits or other advantages to canning food that you might not consider. And then I want to give you some tips for how you can easily and painlessly dip your toe into the waters of food preservation.

So of course preserving food if you are growing your own food is fantastic at saving what otherwise might go to waste. So if for instance you have a whole bunch of cucumbers come on at once making pickles is a great way to preserve that food for later as is freezing or dehydrating other foods. So yes food preservation absolutely that's where it started. That's the roots of preserving food is to preserve a bountiful harvest.

But it also allows live locally and in tune with the seasons. So that's the number one benefit I want to talk about first it. It makes you be a little bit more sustainable and lowers your carbon footprint and it also contributes to the community. And here's what I mean by this. All produce has a season of when it typically grows and reaches its peak right? But we can totally lose touch with both seasons because if you go into a typical grocery store the same produce is there all year long. It doesn't matter if you go in January or you go in April the same produce is there. And that's because it's either shipped across the country to load up your supermarket and grown in another area. Or it comes from outside the country like South America where it's warmer all year long.



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And the other thing that happens is that a lot of that produce has been picked very, very early it's picked unripe and allowed to ripen in transit or while it's sitting in storage before it goes into those grocery stores. So tomatoes is a perfect example of this. Tomatoes are typically picked green for the supermarket and then they're gassed before they are placed out into the actual display. And that means that those tomatoes will never have the incredible flavor of ripening on the vine. They're a little bit a lot of time there more mealy they don't have as great of a texture. You you don't have the depth of flavor. For the longest time I didn't think I like tomatoes except for the ones that my mom grew and I never really understood why that was until I got older and I realize that the ones that are grown at home have a superior flavor because they were vine ripened. So they were not shipped across the country, they were not picked green and they were not gassed to make them turn red. It's a big, big difference especially in things like tomatoes.

Also when you go into a typical grocery store there are only certain varieties that are there. You see the same varieties all the time no matter which store you go to. And that's because that particular produce has to be able to handle being shipped across the country or from outside the country. And so it's grown for its ability to be transported and stored not flavor. So that means we have less diversity we have less choices in the different types of produce that we can have. That's one of the reasons why a lot of people get into growing their own food so that they can have some of those more unusual flavors and unusual produce.

So when you switch to canning food it gets you more in tune with eating within the seasons and you can focus more on locally sourced food which means that you're living more sustainably. It not only tastes better but it has better quality and it's better for the planet. It means that you are picking foods that have actually grown within the last few weeks and you'll notice a huge difference in the quality. And by not having them shipped outside the country or all the way across you don't have all of the transportation elements that are then affecting the environment. So that



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means you have what they call a lower carbon footprint. You're contributing to better environment and you know you're also contributing to your own community when you're buying local food. You're contributing to the community that you actually live in and you're helping out the local farmers and that helps them prosper and that in turn helps your community.

So it's like this big circle big circle of life here when you try to eat locally. Ok so you get that right so how do you live more locally and seasonally? How do you live more in tune with the seasons? Well there's a couple ways you can do this. You can shop farmers market and you can utilize what's actually growing in your neighborhood with your with your neighbors when they have extra produce. And you can grow some of your own food.

And I'm going to talk a little bit more about farmers markets in a minute but I think a great place to start beyond those three things is the to first learn what is even in season in your area at any particular time. And if you don't grow your own food you may not know when something is in season because we're used to seeing it in the supermarket at really odd times. If you don't grow food yourself it's hard to know is that in season? Is that local? You know it is not always an easy thing and I totally get that.

So there's some free tools that you can get online and there's apps that you can log in your zip code or your city or your area of the state and it'll give you a general idea of what is growing or in season for you at any particular time.

Now the thing is that when you're trying to determine what is in season in your area these list and apps and websites might not tell you the full picture of your particular spot. They're just using like general growing zone maps to determine the growing conditions of your area. And then they list what should be growing at any particular time but they're just generalizations. But it is a good place to start cuz it kind of gives you a good idea like is this cucumber season or not? So it's a good place to start.



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Now the reason they're not perfectly accurate is in case you're not a grower or you're not a gardener you might not know this but everyone in their area has their own microclimate. And what that is is just different areas that de to things like mountains are valleys our bodies of water those kind of things can affect the growing conditions of your particular area. And that can make things a little skewed one on way or the other as far as temperature. Or maybe you have fog things like that can affect what you can and can't grow so these microclimate don't exactly fit into the overall general of zoning map that are created for growing that might be mapped out for your area.

So any app or website is just going to give you a general idea of what might be growing in your particular area and at any given time but if you really truly want to know what's in season then go to a local farmers market. And I say that because it only takes you walking up and down one of those aisles that you can instantly see exactly what is growing in your area. You can also talk to the farmers and ask them you know you can say hey I want to make some pickles in the next month or so when do you start getting in cucumbers? Don't ask him that now. They don't get cucumbers until the heat of summer! But you can ask that and they are happy to tell you. They love to talk about food and they love to talk about what they're growing and I find the local farmers no matter where you are are the coolest people ever.

So absolutely talk to them and you'll end up becoming really good friends and having a relationship with them. I have at my local farmers market I have a couple different growers that I go to a different times of the year and I will know exactly when they're getting in their freshest best cucumbers and I know when to go. So it is always important to have that relationship if you want to do some big canning projects. But just having a general idea for general eating you can get that just from walking up and down the aisle.

And I know that right now at the very beginning of March most of you do not have any farmer markets running right now and that's because you still have winter weather and the only things that are growing are the things



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that are grown in green houses. The farmer markets are usually not even open and it's totally fine. But in a month or two you will have farmer markets starting to open up in your area and it just happens to be when canning season starts to hit its stride. So then you can go... go to the local farmers market and talk to your farmer. And in the meantime you can check out some of the sources that I'm going to have in the show notes for this episode that will list some apps and websites where you can plug in your local information and see what is growing for any particular time of year.

Now to get to the show notes you just go to [LivingHomegrown.com/45](http://LivingHomegrown.com/45). Ok so that is benefit number one: living more locally and in tune with the seasons. And I think you can see why that is a great benefit.

Alright so number two. The second benefit is to have more flavor in your life. And for me this is a biggie in fact it's the main reason that I preserve food. When you are buying food that is in season you are using it and consuming it when it has its peak flavors. It's not picked unripe and left to ripen in a storage unit somewhere it's picked at its peak and those flavors are top notch.

Also when you are in tune with number 1 or in tune with the seasons, you are accessing a bigger variety of food and a bigger variety of flavors that are not in the supermarket. So this is really key for me whether you grow it yourself or you go to the local farmers market you will find the flavor is so superior not only because it's in season but also because you are getting to access fruits and vegetables that are not in the supermarket. They are fruits and vegetables that taste fantastic and not necessarily would make it if they were being shipped across the country.

This is especially true with apples. If you go to the local farmers market you will have access to apples in the fall. That's when you have apple season but you will have access to these incredible flavors of apples that you have probably never even heard of or tasted before. Because they do not ship well. A lot of them have them thinner skin or they are very delicate and so they can't be thrown in the back of a truck and shipped across the



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country they will be all bruised up by the time they get to where they're going. So they are never shipped.

So if you want those kind of flavors you have to either grow them yourself or have access to a friend who has maybe some fruit trees or you just go to your local farmers market or a co-op or a CSA which is a Community Supported Agriculture which is right at a farm. There's a lot of ways to get local flavors. And when you do you will be blown away by how much better the food tastes. And for me that is the main point of canning and preserving because I am all about the flavor and I want to capture that flavor in a time capsule of a canning jar and place it on the shelf.

And when you have any kind of training or you've canned for a while and you get the hang of it you start to learn how to enhance the flavor and you're able to create your own flavorful preserves by adding herbs and spices. So canning food is like this gateway to flavor for me and that is one of the main points of a lot of my canning training is to capture that flavor.

So how do you do this? Well first of all you don't have to do these massive giant marathon canning sessions to capture incredible flavor. You can make really small artisan batches of preserves and each one is its own little unique time capsule. So it can be very small and fast.

You can also freeze a lot of this food especially fruits like berries you can freeze a lot of them so that you can create that time capsule later. I do that a lot with my jams and jellies is I will measure out the fruit and I will bag it up for a batch and I will put it in the freezer and then I will make that jam way later when I have more time. And I have frozen that incredible flavor and captured it and saved it for later which is fantastic.

Also when you really want to focus on flavor you really should pay attention to freshness and not just the freshness of the produce which is of course hugely important you want the freshest produce possible. But also the freshness of the herbs and spices you will be adding to those preserves because if you use for instance fresh herbs instead of dried you



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have a much higher level of volatile oils in the fresh herbs and that freshness will impart that flavor into the preserves.

And the same goes for spices you don't want to pick the spice jar that's in the back of the covered that's 10 years old it just won't have the vibrancy that you want to draw out all the incredible fruit flavors of a jam for instance. So if you're ever going to use a spice in a recipe make sure you have a fresh container of that spice or even better if it's something like nutmeg you should grate it so that you are releasing all of that flavor in the freshest state possible.

Now in last week's episode podcast number 44 I talked a lot about tips for bumping up flavor. And I talked about the role of lemon and sugar in jams and jellies and how they can affect the flavors so if you really want to learn more about that be sure to go to episode number 44 on my website and there's a transcript and information there for you. But as a general rule you always want to go for freshness as your key point in capturing the best flavor. And you might be surprised how just a few tweaks like fresh herbs and fresh spices can really show case that seasonal flavor that you're trying to preserve.

Okay so the third benefit of canning food is that you are becoming part of the food story. And what I mean is that when you can food you not only just know what is in your food or more importantly what is not in the food because you've put it together yourself so you know exactly what's in it. No preservatives, there's no chemicals you know it's organic and it's totally clean, pure food.

So you not only know that but you also know where that food came from. You know the story of that food. And canning canning lets you be a part of that story. Which means that you either start the story yourself when you take your food from seed to the pantry to the table or you can step into the story along the way. Maybe you buy some organic produce at the farmers market or you get a bag of produce from your friend's tree and you can transition that food into something really, really special by putting your own creative spin on it. And that act, that act of taking that flavor and capturing



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it in this time capsule of a canning jar makes you part of this long standing tradition. And then when you share it with your family or your friends you're sharing either part of your garden or part of yourself because you created it.

So I think you can tell that I get really passionate about the whole idea of being part of that food story. It's what makes canning fun! It's what makes it more than a hobby. It's part of your life style. So just to recap the three benefits of canning food are that it allows you to live more locally and in tune with the seasons, it allows you to have more flavor in your life and it lets you be part of the food story or the food journey of that food.

Now remember I'm going to have in the show notes for this episode links to some different sources and apps for finding out what is growing in your particular area at any particular time and none of these apps are perfect but it'll give you a general idea.

And that's in the show notes at [LivingHomegrown.com/45](http://LivingHomegrown.com/45). I'll also have a link there for signing up for the Canning Academy so that you can get all the free goodies that I'm going to be sending out of the next few weeks or you can just text the words to canfood all one word no spaces canfood to the number 44222.

So that's it for this week. Until next time just keep working towards living a little bit more local seasonal and homegrown. Take care!

**Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown podcast. Visit [LivingHomegrown.com](http://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.**