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### Interview with Ella May Bard

Ella May Bard

Lisa M. Groesz

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Accession number: ELFS-LMG-F012901.A  
Researcher's name: Lisa M. Groesz  
Event: Interview with Ella May Bard  
Place: My Apartment, 105A Aclands, Gambier, 2:15pm  
Co-workers present: None

We met at the bookstore where she purchased a Snapple ice tea to keep her voice going. Then we drove over to my apartment. We shared one of the couches and talked. Immediately, I was impressed about how knowledgeable she was. Although she no longer preserves, she is aware of the risks and the places to purchase the tools and the benefits.

Very matter of fact, she knew common errors that people would make. Two girls called her once, confused because all of one girl's batch spoiled while the other did not. Gathering information slowly, she found that they had used different brands of jars but the same preserving time. Canning is very much a formula and things have to be followed exactly.

This caution is especially necessary because when time, moisture, and temperature are right, bacteria will grow. Freezing disrupts bacteria by dividing and separating them. Canning destroys bacteria through the heat. Because pressure canners reach a higher heat than hot water baths (120 degrees compared to 105 degrees), low acid foods can now be safely canned too. Drying destroys through removing moisture that bacteria can grow in. Because apples and beef can take 20 hours to dry in the dehydrator, Bard laughed and said, "drying is only for the ones who are really dedicated."

There are two other potential problems. When the pressure canner is finding the right pressure, often 10 pounds, one has to manipulate the heat on the stove. If the pressure in the canner fluctuates too much, all the liquid drains out. The other problem is that people will tighten the lids too tight. Bard said, "I've had people bring me lids that are buckled because they tightened it so tight, when it heated and expanded, it literally buckled."

Although Bard no longer cans, she remembers the last time she canned with her mom. She did not make it back home the following year in time to can the pickles. Her mom said, "'It had taken so long this year,' she just could not believe, because she remembered last year it just seemed to go so fast and I said, 'now, you remember, last year you had a slave hear helping you.'" They canned tomatoes, peaches and green beans. The peaches would go into upside down cakes.

Although she enjoys her memories, she is cautious about people picking up preserving. This surprised me because I am aware of how farming is much a part of the culture in Knox County and I assumed that preserving would be an automatic companion to that. She addresses the fact that fewer people garden. If the food does not originally come out of the garden, money will not be saved. Bard said, "You are not going to be able to buy, at full market price, fresh produce, buy all the equipment, and spend all your time, and beat the prices they they can do when they can do it en masse." She is also worried that people will not have time to follow the directions properly and then preserving food should be avoided.

For people who still want to try and can, jars and canners can be purchased at garage sales. The Extensions office can check the dial gauges on pressure canners to

determine that they still properly work. In buying a new canner, the cheapest would be about \$49.95 and it goes up to \$120.00.

Overall, I appreciated her knowledge of preserving food. I mentioned that Kate Brown had compared times between pressure canning green beans or using the hot water bath method. She laughed and said that the hot water bath method is not even a possibility for green beans, no matter how long they sit in it, because the water cannot become hot enough to destroy all the bacteria. Bard was also helpful in pulling out Mary Bebout's name for me to contact.