Illinois 4-H Food Preservation Judging Updates

Please note changes to judging sheets and exhibit requirements for food preservation projects.

- Although family recipes might be delicious, for safe food preservation we insist on tested/approved recipes. **Recipes used for projects must come from tested/approved sources** (Extension, USDA, Ball, Kerr, Mrs. Wages, Sure-Jell, and other commercial product companies.)

- **Ask about processing method used.** Our goal is to educate the 4-H participant in safe food preservation practices.

- **Do not open jars or taste!** For food safety reasons and fairness to all 4-H participants, do not taste participant projects. We recommend asking the 4-H participant if s/he has tasted their project and if so, what did they think.

- **Remove the bands for judging.** It is important in conference judging to discuss headspace and the need for accurate space at the top of the jars. You may shake the jar, turn the jar upside down, and rotate the jar. The lid should remain secure during this inspection.

**Headspace guide:**

- Jams, jellies & juices = ¼ inch
- Fruits & tomatoes= ½ inch
- Vegetables, Spaghetti sauce & meats= 1 inch

**Source:** USDA

- **Troubleshoot with participants if there are problems with headspace.**
  - Too little headspace?
    - Food may bubble out during processing.
    - Deposit on rim may prevent proper sealing.
  - Too much headspace?
    - Food at the top is likely to discolor.
    - Jar may not seal properly, because not all air may be forced from jar.

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