

Picking vegetable varieties for preserving

By Deb Botzek-Linn, University of Minnesota Extension

ST. CLOUD, MN (2/23/15) — The arrival of seed catalogues in our mailbox is a promise of Spring! If you are a home food preserver who plans to pickle, can, freeze or dry your garden produce, it is important to select vegetable varieties that have been developed for home preserving. Plan to preserve dill pickles this summer? Be sure to select a “pickling” cucumber variety rather than a slicing cucumber to plant in your garden.

For pickled beets select a dark, rich colored beet. A beet variety description may state ‘harvest early for pickling’ in the catalogue or on the seed packet.

A thick flavorful salsa begins with planting a paste tomato variety like Roma, Viva Italian or Amish Paste rather than a juice tomato. They will be identified as ‘great for sauces and salsas.’ Paste tomatoes are also a good choice for making flavorful dried tomatoes.

With green beans you will find that some varieties are better for freezing while others produce a quality canned bean and some are best for fresh eating. Read the description on the seed packet. Pole beans, rather than bush beans, are easier to pick!

Winter squash freezes so much better than summer squash. Pumpkins are interesting as there are so many different kinds, but few will produce a quality pumpkin pie. A pumpkin to use for baking should state ‘excellent for making pies and freezing’ rather than ‘use as a carving pumpkin and for fall decorations.’

Enjoy paging through seed catalogues and exploring your local garden center, but be sure to read the description of the vegetables you are selecting, and match the vegetable variety to the preservation method you plan to use.

And always, select a packet of seed for a vegetable that is new to you, just for the fun of it!

Any use of this article must include the byline or following credit line:

Deb Botzek-Linn is a food safety educator with the University of Minnesota Extension.

*The University of Minnesota, including the University of Minnesota Extension,
is an equal opportunity educator and employer.*