

by Megan Westerby

Canning is both awesome and completely insane.

The same could be said for a number of cooking techniques, I suppose, but I have a particular appreciation for and frustration with canning, since it both reassures me as a home cook and frustrates me from a historical perspective.

One of my best friends (as Mindy Kaling says, it's a tier, not a person) was an economics major while we were in college together. This meant that at one point we had a conversation about the economic realities of home canning and how it's not actually that efficient to preserve foods on an individual household level. The likelihood that one household could preserve enough food to support itself is low, without significant investment in time and resources. The economic truth is that having other people preserve and can and store foods is the best bet for a reliable, sustainable, and affordable supply chain.

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I love taking the apricots in our yard and eating them fresh, as many as I can, then turning the rest into jam. I love making pickles. I love the annual cherry picking trip and the resulting jar or six of preserves. But these are indulgences that I treasure, not a way of life. Every time I make something, it's a reminder of the very lucky circumstances in which I find myself, as a person who cooks for joy, not for sustenance; who cans for pleasure, not for survival.

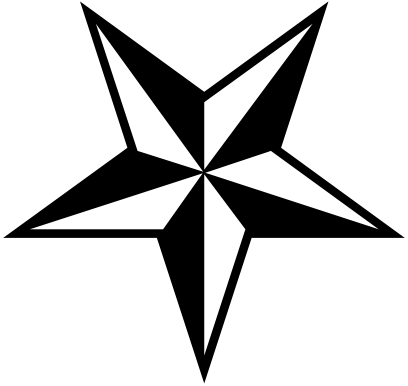
Separately, my college had a display on the history of tinned fish and how their labels transformed very quickly from being baseline informative (this can has this type of fish in it) to being beautiful and/or advertising (this can has the best darned tasting type of this fish you'll ever have! also look at this beautiful art nouveau font). There's something intrinsic to the modern American food system that intertwines processed food and marketed food. Which isn't to say that fishmongers didn't engage in advertising or marketing tactics.

The problems and concerns of my age are very notably different than the problems and concerns of just two generations ago, when supply chains were different and food staples weren't massively subsidized. Food will always be a cultural struggle, but it's a good struggle.

People have always hustled, but the game changed as the margins grew wider and the corporations grew more complex.

In the history of post-war food in America, canned foods were glorious. You didn't have to eat only local and seasonal foods; you could eat a motherfucking canned peach shipped in from another state anytime you wanted. Canned foods were new possibility, new recipes, and new delights, and they didn't require refrigerated shipping. Sure, it's easy to mock the Kraft recipe book now, but it represented experimentation and freedom and a whole lot of good things.

Maybe it's that I spent a lot of time with my grandmother, and my mom spent a lot of time with her grandmother, listening to family stories and learning about home kitchen governance, but I find it hard to disrespect the women who embraced the canned food trend and learned to thrive. I like living in a culture interested in local and seasonal produce, turning away from having every fruit and vegetable available anytime of the year.



by Jess Driscoll

Drive four hours east of Vancouver, along the twisting highway cut through mountains and valleys, and you'll find the Fruit Stand Capital of Canada. They say you can't give yourself a nickname, but this is exactly what the village of Keremeos has done. The rest of the province, those of us in the Lower Mainland who make the full day trip, season after season, for the best peaches, apples, and berries, would agree.

The General was founded in 2009 by Jess Driscoll and Megan Westerby with an exchange that went something like this:

J: we should open a bakery  
M: we should totally open a bakery!

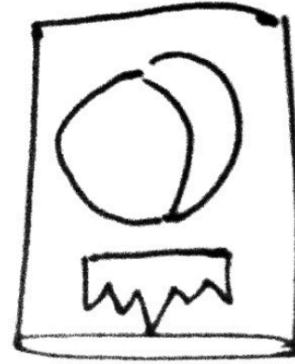
Opening a bakery, it turns out, it really fucking hard to do, especially when you live on either sides of the border.

We started writing the Review instead. Each issue is hyper-focused on a single food noun. Find the archive at:  
[jessdriscoll.com/thegeneral/](http://jessdriscoll.com/thegeneral/)

The Okanagan Valley, the region of British Columbia between the coast and the mountains, has long been known for its fruit. Kids in the '60s, especially kids like the writer George Bowering, spent their summers in the Okanagan, picking fruit and making money for the next year of school or the next year of living in the city, trying to write a book.

My grandma has been making the trip for years. She has her favourite stand. She makes note of the price she paid last year and the year before. She phones her order in before they drive up to insure she gets the best fruit at the best price. My grandma has been making the trip so long, she buys from the son now, his father recently retired.

Once you get those peaches, those berries, that flat of tomatoes home, it's time to start canning.



It's easy, too easy, to eat what turns up at your grocery store. Strawberries from California and lettuce from Mexico and even the apples from the Okanagan last far into the fall, stretching into the winter.

But a peach at the height of season is a glorious thing. Don't miss it. Eat as many as you can, when you can, and can the rest.

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