

Kim Haynes turns to canning, gardening, and Amish produce auctions to stay self-sufficient in the COVID-19 era.

It wasn't until the COVID-19 pandemic hit that Kim Haynes, a managing consultant in BKD's Springfield office, realized she'd lost sight of her self-sufficiency. Her journey back to greater self-reliance started with a garden.

Planting the seeds of opportunity

Kim grew up on a 10-acre farm surrounded by sheep and produce in a small town called Tina, four hours north of Springfield. She was raised to be strong and independent and later married her husband Pat, who was raised the same. But a little of this nature was forgotten as life went on. After seeing shortages of essential grocery supplies, lockdowns, and supply chain issues, Kim and Pat bought some dirt, planted seeds, and hoped for the best.

"We needed to get back to basics—and without hoarding supplies. We just realized we needed to make sure we were prepared for the future," says Kim. "I remember my mom and grandma canning when I was younger, so I researched how to can and began turning the produce into a more long-term product. It's been an unexpected hobby, but I really enjoy the process and opportunity to feel independent again."

She has since used her thriving garden, as well as Amish produce auctions, to can 150 pounds of tomatoes and 100 pounds of apples, in addition to jams, pickles, meat, pumpkin, winter squash, and orange juice.

Kim first visited the Amish produce auction in Seymour, Missouri, in need of tomatoes to can for winter storage. Her dad goes to the auctions weekly for supplies to fill his produce stand, so Kim wanted to see what deals she could find.

While the canning tomatoes were going for much more than she was willing to pay, Kim was able to purchase a great deal on more than 100 pounds of tomatoes since she found ones that were a bit smaller or had blemishes.

"It's a great place to go if you need to buy things in bulk because you can't just buy a pound of produce, you have to buy things in 'lots,'" explains Kim. "I really enjoyed going and found out quickly that you need to know store prices to know if you're getting a good deal."

Getting on the same page

Kim and Pat have clashed over where to live for years. For Kim, living in the suburbs where work, the grocery store, and her favorite restaurants are just a short drive away is most ideal. But for Pat, it doesn't get much better than living on a small farm outside of town. Since Kim's gardening and canning journey through COVID-19, she's beginning to warm up to the idea of being on a farm.

"Now I can see how living on a small farm with a few acres would be beneficial to us and our goal to be more self-sufficient," she says.

The pandemic experience has helped open the door for the couple to discuss what is most important and what isn't as significant as they once thought. They're currently looking to the future to really analyze where they want to be in five years, both in terms of physical location and general self-reliance.

Having thoroughly enjoyed her first months canning and gardening, Kim plans to double her garden space in the coming year and be even more intentional about what she plants. Each year, she hopes to purchase less from the grocery store and grow more of their needs.

"It's a work in progress, but I know it's something great to work toward," she says.

Canning Qs with Kim

Q: What kind(s) of canning do you do and why?

A: I mostly can fruits and vegetables but have canned various meats. Soon, I want to learn how to can quick breads, cakes, and whole meals in jars. I started canning because I was running out of freezer room and needed to preserve what I was getting from the garden and sales.

Q: What are some pros and cons of canning?

A: The obvious pro is getting long-term storage and not having to worry about losing your product due to power outages. I also really like knowing exactly what is in my food instead of grocery store products with ingredients you can't even pronounce. A big con of canning is the initial expense. Investing in a pressure canner, special utensils, jars, rings, and lids can be expensive. But most items can be used for a long time before having to be replaced.

Q: What are some of your favorite canning recipes?

A: Cinnamon brown sugar apples. We probably open two to three jars a week! I also like the versatility of canning tomato sauce. You can add seasonings, herbs, and spices and turn it into pasta sauce, pizza sauce, ketchup, BBQ sauce, etc.

Q: Have you had any gardening/canning mistakes?

A: I've had a ton of gardening mistakes due to being inexperienced and not researching as well as I should have. My biggest canning failure to date would be trying to make grape jelly when I was missing pectin (this is what firms the grapes into jelly and not syrup). I decided to cook the grapes down to reduce the liquid, but it went from runny to a thick gel in about 30 seconds. It also turned a questionable color, so I added food coloring. It tasted good but will probably only be something to use as a spooky treat at a Halloween party. (Luckily it only made four small jars!)



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