

## Canning Applesauce

My sister-in-law Gina decided I needed to learn to preserve applesauce. It didn't matter that I had given birth to Laurel 10 days before, 8 weeks premature. It didn't matter Karen, at 19 months, was on meds for seizures with the side effect of hyperactivity. Gina lived 100 miles away, and this was in the 70s when 100 miles was a lot longer than it is today. Gina happened to be in my area and decided now was the time.

She went to a nearby apple orchard and picked a bushel of macs and a bushel of cortlands, bought canning jars, and a big black 7-quart steamer, and commandeered my kitchen. I sat at the kitchen table and half heartedly watched, just to be polite. I never canned before that September 1975 day and had no plans to can in the future.

I don't remember when I actually pulled that memory from the long-ago file in my brain and began canning. Just remember those two little babies had grown into pre-schoolers standing on chairs turning the handle on the cutting machine or applesauce grinder. It then became a tradition of 40 years.

The day began with a trip to Lyman Orchards in Middlefield, Connecticut, then to southern New Hampshire when we moved to northern Massachusetts.

At home, step one was Kenny Rogers singing *The Gambler*. Who knows why. Next we set up stations—washing apples, then through the cutting machine, then on to the stove with a little water, then filling the jars, then wiping applesauce particles from the lid, then putting on the lid, then putting 7 jars in the canner, then waiting for water to boil, and then timing for 20 minutes. We worked mid-morning to midnight when the stickiness was cleaned. 100 jars. Both Karen and Laurel, in their thirties and forties, invited friends to their homes to teach them the process.

Who knew canning applesauce as a family would become a cherished growing up memory for those two babies who witnessed it but didn't understand their first applesauce lesson over 45 years ago.