

# Leon County Cooks: Mary Sue Robeson Watson



Mary Sue Watson stays busy doing the things she loves. *Sherry's Shots*

By Sherry Matney

This week's cook is a Leon County country girl who grew up in the Redland Community on the Brookdale family farm. Mary Sue Watson has loved gardening, canning and cooking all her life. She became a member of the Leon County Master Gardeners in 2005 and currently is president of the organization.

Watson attended school in Leon where her mother was a teacher. She was a 4H Gold Star girl in her youth and graduated valedictorian of her class. After receiving her degree from Sam Houston University in Huntsville she enjoyed a long teaching career in the Sugarland/Pasadena area. Watson retired from education and moved back to Leon County about ten years ago.

She currently lives in Centerville and substitute teaches at the Centerville school. Retirement may have changed her direction but has not slowed her down, even a smidgen. Mary volunteers for the Lord's Pantry of Leona and teaches a ladies Sunday School Class at the Leona Baptist Church. She also sings in the church praise team and plays both the piano and keyboard for her church. Mary became interested

in Master Gardeners when she moved back to Leon County. There was a chapter in Leon County at the time but it was inactive. She and her brother, James, drove to Bryan every Friday to do their training and later drove to Bryan to do their volunteer work. She said since the organization is funded by the Commissioner's Court they felt it fair to return their work to that area. She credits Tommy Neyland for rekindling the fire under the Leon County group. This is her second year to be president.

The love of her life is her family; a son David and a daughter Julie. She has two wonderful grandsons who call her GrandMary.

The following recipes are from the Home Canning Seminar held in Centerville on June 19. Since Mary Sue enjoys canning she felt these would be appropriate recipes for her story.

**Traditional Salsa**  
Makes about 4 pints  
7 cups diced seeded peeled cored tomatoes (about 15 medium)  
6 green onions, sliced  
2 jalapeno peppers, diced  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
½ cup vinegar  
2 tbsp lime juice  
4 drops hot pepper sauce

2 tbsp minced cilantro  
2 tsp salt  
4 pint or 8 half pint glass preserving jars with lids and bands

1. Prepare boiling water canner. Heat jars and lids in simmering water until ready for use. Do not boil. Set bands aside.

2. Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan.

3. Heat to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 15 minutes.

4. Ladle hot salsa into hot jars leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe rim. Center hot lid on jar. Apply band and adjust until fit is fingertip tight.

5. Process filled jars in a boiling water canner for 15 minutes, adjusting for altitude. Remove jars and cool. Check lids for seal after 24 hours. Lid should not flex up and down when center is pressed.

**Pickled Dill Okra**  
Yield about 7-8 pints  
7 pounds small okra pods, fresh and crisp  
6 small hot peppers  
4 tsp dill seed  
7 to 8 garlic cloves  
2/3 cup canning or pickling salt  
6 cups water  
6 cups vinegar

It takes about 1 pound of okra to fill a pint jar.

Wash okra. Fill jars firmly with whole okra, leaving 1 inch headspace.

Place 1 garlic clove in each jar.

Combine the salt, hot peppers, dill seed and vinegar in large saucepan and bring to a boil.

Pour hot pickling solution over okra, leaving ¼ to ½ inch headspace. You'll notice that it appears to be bubbling as the solution percolates down inside the okra, which have cavities. You'll need to wait a few minutes and add more solution. Seat the lid and hand tighten the ring around them.

Put the jars in the canner and keep them covered with at least 1 inch of water. Keep the water boiling. Boil them for 10 minutes.

Lift the jars out of the water and put on a dishtowel without touching or bumping them together. Let them sit in a dry cool place overnight. Make sure lid is sealed by pressing gently down on the center, if you feel a slight indentation it is sealed properly.

Wait at least 2-3 days for the seasonings to be absorbed into the okra then enjoy.

## Cattle raisers across Texas urge Senate to stop Clean Water Restoration Act

Fort Worth, Texas - The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee today passed a bill out of committee that would give the federal government regulatory authority over stock tanks, drainage ditches and any water features found on family ranches despite large opposition from cattle raisers across the country.

S. 787, the Clean Water Restoration Act, would achieve unprecedented expansion of federal authority by removing the word "navigable" from the Clean Water Act definition of waters in the U.S. and replacing it with "waters of the United States." The new definition would grant the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers virtually unlimited regulatory control over all wet areas within a state.

The proposed legislation would require cattle producers to manage around puddles in the middle of pastures,

drainage areas, road ditches and more. If cattle producers are unable to demonstrate proper management of these areas to the federal government, they could be required to get a permit, which would be far to impractical and expensive.

Additionally, the legislation would result in a major decrease in authority from state governments and private property owners all across the United States.

"All waters are not equal in terms of their environmental function and value, and they should not be regulated in the same way," TS-CRA President Dave Scott, a rancher from Richmond, Texas, said. "If this bill passes in Congress, ranchers across the U.S. will be forced to get a permit to continue everyday operations on their own land."

"The federal government already struggles to handle the backlog of 15,000 existing permit requests; how

it plans to deal with the massive amount of new permitting requirements and litigation this bill will surely create is beyond reason," Scott continued. "There is no doubt ranchers like me will be the ones forced to cover the costs, not to mention the huge administrative burdens of endless government red tape."

The Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association is asking the Senate to stop this bill should it come up for a full Senate vote.



Prize winning preserver Dan Wingerton gives tips on how to can the perfect vegetable. *Sherry's Shots*

## Eat what you can, can what you can't

By Sherry Matney

On June 19, 2009 the Lone Rangers Master Gardeners of Leon County sponsored a Home Canning Seminar at the Centerville Municipal Building. There was a standing room only crowd on hand to learn the secrets that were shared.

The presentation began

with president Mary Sue Watson introducing speakers Dan Wingerton, Charlene Manning and Cynthia Torno. Elaine Trefry was scheduled to speak but was unable to attend because of illness.

Torno described the three basic preservation methods which would be presented: canning, freezing and drying.

She also gave an overview on how preservation works, discussing methods of canning, pickling, freezing and drying.

Dan Wingerton, who has won ribbons at the State Fair of Texas, gave a presentation on canning safety. He discussed the best tactics while using the various types of

equipment.

After the preliminaries were out of the way the presenters demonstrated the various techniques using the pressure canner and boiling water bath methods.

Making, salsas, pickling, jams and jellies were the next few topics followed by freezing, drying and storage.

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