

# Gilmer County Cannery - 2018

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## In Clear Creek ag. center Cannery open for 2018 season

By MICHAEL ANDREWS  
MOUNTAIN LIFE EDITOR

The Gilmer County Cannery is a resource worth driving an hour east to utilize, a couple from Whitfield County said last week.

"We canned over at the (old cannery) before this one got here. We love this new one. It's so modern," agreed longtime canners Bill and Dianne Caylor as they filled a box full of Mason jars with fresh half-runner beans.

The Caylor were among

customers who brought their newly harvested garden vegetables to the facility on opening day of its canning season Tuesday, June 26.

"We had folks here this morning from Pickens and Fannin County, as well," said young farmer teacher and cannery supervisor Mike Bushey Tuesday.

The cannery will be open each Tuesday and Thursday through December, with the exception of

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### CANNERY

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Thanksgiving Day, Bushey confirmed.

"If people are going to do a real large quantity, maybe something over 200 quarts at a time, it would be better if they could get a hold of someone here and we could see about coming in on a different day (to accommodate that amount)," said Bushey.

Last year's move from the cannery's longtime home beside the county school bus garage on Bobcat Trail to the new Clear Creek Agricultural Education Center on the middle school campus brought the installation of more modern processing and canning equipment. That specialized equipment includes a new steam tunnel and six pressure cookers capable of handling 80 glass jars or almost 100 cans at once.

"They're also about 70 years newer than (the older ones we used to have)," Bushey said about the industrial pressure cookers.

Last year was the first full season at the Clear Creek cannery and some are still unaware that it moved from the Bobcat Trail building opened in 1986, which many still called "the new cannery" right up to its last season in 2016.

Prior to 1986, the canning plant was located downtown near the old Ellijay Elementary School.

"Our numbers last year

weren't too far off from what they normally are. It's more of a drive for people who live closer to the old location, but people on this end of the county seem to like it better because it's closer to them," said Bushey. "We have a Facebook page for the ag. center, so that helps spread the word (that we've moved). So does word-of-mouth. Once our regulars start showing up, they point others in the right direction."

The cannery provides quart-size tin cans at .70 cents each, but customers who prefer to use glass must bring their own jars, rings and seals. Pressure cooking and some prep work is done in-house by supervisors Bushey and Larry Young, and agriculture teachers Paul Little, David Bushey and Nick Cantrell.

The facility, which opens at 8 a.m. for preparation and processing, has an arrival cutoff time of 11 a.m. All food is expected to be in containers by 1 p.m. and picked up between 3 and 5 p.m. the same day.

Processing fees are as follows:

For vegetables - tin cans, 70 cents each; pint glass jars, 30 cents each and quart glass jars, 40 cents each.

For fruit and produce requiring additional processing - tin cans, 75 cents each; pint glass jars, 35 cents each and quart glass jars, 45 cents each.

Some people had issues

with all the rain and seeds rotting in the ground, so they had to replant (their gardens)," said Bushey about produce brought in during the plant's first week open this year.

"I think we'll have a good beginning and it will last a little longer because a lot of people replanted. Right now, most everything we're seeing is either green beans or (cucumbers) for making pickles."

That's what 22-year-old Devlyn Carroll was doing on opening day — carefully measuring salt and vinegar for his jars of kosher pickles and pickled cauliflower.

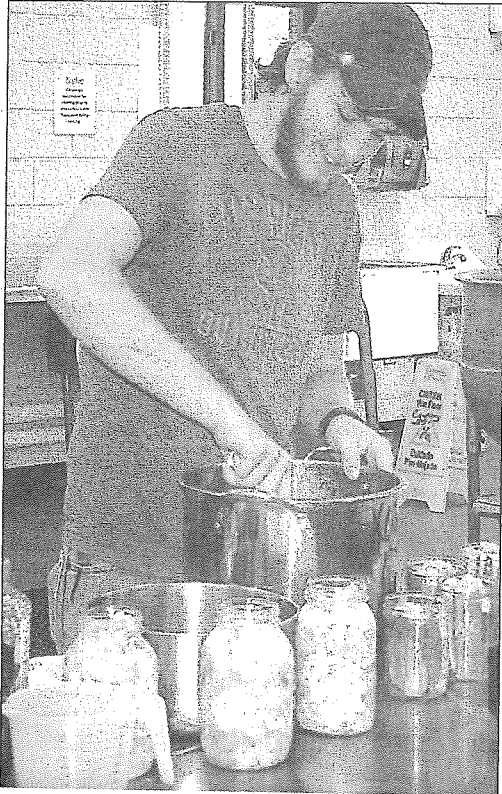
"It's a good experience," said Carroll, of Murray County, about using the new cannery.

Bushey said a new textured epoxy floor has been put in since last year's canning season.

"The concrete in the old building had a broom finish on it, but the floor in the new building was polished concrete. We didn't want anybody to fall or slip when processing something like apples and some of that juice gets on the floor," he added. "The school board put up the money to do (a textured floor), and I think it's definitely going to help."

Despite the rougher floor, it still helps to wear shoes with good traction when canning, Bushey advised.

"There is usually more of an issue when people are wearing shoes like Crocs or flip-flops," he added.



MICHAEL ANDREWS/MOUNTAIN LIFE EDITOR

Devlyn Carroll, of Murray County, makes homemade pickles and pickled cauliflower at the Gilmer County Cannery on opening day of the facility's 2018 canning season Tuesday, June 26.