



Let's Preserve Newsletter

Lancaster County

1383 Arcadia Road, Room 1, Lancaster, PA 17601-3184

717-394-6851
 FAX: 717-394-3962
 E-mail: LancasterExt@psu.edu

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Dear Home Food Preserver,

My shelves are beginning to fill up with home canned products. Just looking at the jars neatly lined up gives me a sense of accomplishment. I think I got this from my mother. She still cans or freezes much of the produce she and Dad use through the winter.

Fall fruits are some of my favorites to make into jams, jellies and spreads. My son, Justin, and husband, Bob, especially enjoy fruit butters and combination spreads like the Ambrosia Conserve featured in this issue. Besides the traditional use as bread and toast toppers, they make wonderful fillings for bar cookies, quick Danish, and between layer cakes. An extra jar makes a perfect hostess gift and a basket of your own homemade treats fills the bill for a holiday gift.

All the canning may prompt you to consider preparing some home canned products for your church holiday bazaar or fundraiser. Before moving ahead with your project, there are some things to consider. You will find an article about preparing canned foods for the bazaar in this issue. If you have additional questions or you are interested in pursuing your own entrepreneurship in homemade products, give me a call; we have some good resources to help you get started.

This is the last of the Let's Preserve newsletters for the year. Martha and I hope you have enjoyed receiving this information and have found it useful.

We hope to see you at one of the workshops that are scheduled this fall.

Sincerely,

Nancy R. Wiker
 Extension Agent—Family & Consumer Sciences

In Consultation with:
 Martha Zepp

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Feature Food of the Month

Ambrosia Conserve

The 4-H'ers in the Jams and Jellies project made this, and it received rave reviews. They adapted the recipe by using canned pineapple instead fresh. It's wonderful on hot muffins or biscuits. See if you enjoy it as much as they did.

1 large fresh pineapple chopped, cored, peeled or
 3—20 oz. cans crushed pineapple (juice pack)
 drained

- 1 cup orange juice (about 2 medium)
- 1/3 cup grated orange peel (from 2 medium oranges)
- 5 cups sugar
- 1 cup coconut
- 1 cup chopped maraschino cherries
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds (may be toasted to bring out flavor)

Combine pineapple, orange juice, and peel in a large saucepot. Simmer 10 minutes. Add sugar, stirring until dissolved. Cook rapidly almost to gelling point. As mixture thickens, stir frequently to prevent sticking. Remove from heat; stir in coconut, cherries and almonds. Ladle hot conserve into hot jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Adjust two-piece caps. Process 15 minutes in a boiling-water canner. Yield: about 6 half-pints.

Almonds may be toasted under the broiler by placing in a single layer on a pie pan. Stir frequently and watch to avoid burning. Broil until golden brown. Another method of toasting almonds is to bake them at 350°F until golden brown.

A conserve is a mixture of fruits with sugar cooked to a jam like consistency. A true conserve contains nuts and raisins. Nuts, if used, should be added during the last five minutes of cooking.

Fall Harvest

Spiced Apple Jelly

This was another 4-H favorite. Simply tie whole spices such as cloves, allspice and a cinnamon stick, in a spice bag and cook the spices with the apples when preparing the juice. Discard the spices before draining juice in a jelly bag. Adding the spices to the juice makes it worth the time and effort to make what is otherwise a very plain jelly. The 4-H'ers used the jelly directions in the box of powdered pectin, but this method of flavoring the apple juice can be used in any recipe using freshly prepared juice.

For a better flavor for your jelly, try combining two or more varieties of apples when you prepare the juice.

Canned Apple Pie Filling

Canned pie fillings have received favorable comments. Remember to use Clear Jel® for the thickener. There is no tested substitute, and cornstarch or flour will thicken the juices too quickly for safe processing in the boiling water bath or pressure canner.

Ingredients needed for 7 quarts:

- 6 quarts fresh sliced apples (blanched)
- 5 ½ cups granulated sugar
- 1 ½ cups Clear Jel®
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 2 ½ cups cold water
- 5 cups apple juice, unsweetened
- ¾ cup bottled lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg (optional)
- 7 drops yellow food coloring (optional)



Use firm, crisp apples. Stayman, Golden Delicious, Rome, and other varieties of similar quality are suitable. If apples lack tartness, use an additional ¼ cup of lemon juice for each 6 quarts of slices.

Procedure for preparing apple filling: Wash, peel, and core apples. Prepare slices ½ inch wide and place in water containing 1 teaspoon of ascorbic acid crystals or six 500-mg vitamin C tablets in 1 gallon of water, to prevent browning.

For fresh fruit, place 6 cups at a time in 1 gallon of boiling water. Boil each batch 1 minute after the water returns to a boil. Drain, but keep heated fruit in a covered bowl or pot. Combine sugar, Clear Jel®, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a large kettle with water, apple juice, and food coloring. Stir and cook on medium-high heat until mixture thickens and begins to bubble. Add lemon juice and boil sauce 1 minute, stirring constantly. Fold in drained apple slices, immediately fill jars with mixture, leaving 1-inch headspace, and process for 25 minutes in a boiling water canner. (30 minutes at altitudes of 1001 to 3000 feet, 35 minutes at 3001 to 6000 feet, and 40 minutes above 6000 feet).

Drying Fall Fruits

Two of the most successful fruits for drying are apples and pears. Dried fruits taste sweeter because the water has been removed concentrating the fruit's natural flavors. They can be eaten as a snack or added to cereals, granola, muffins and other quick breads.

An easy way to prevent the washed and peeled fruit from darkening is to dip it into an ascorbic acid mixture (1 teaspoon of powdered ascorbic acid or 3000 mg crushed ascorbic acid tablets in 2 cups water) for 3 to 5 minutes. Commercial ascorbic acid mixtures are convenient to use—mix 1 ½ tablespoons of the ascorbic acid mixture with one quart of water. Drain the fruit well, pat dry, and place on dryer trays.

Apples and pears can be dried in a dehydrator or in an oven at 135°F. If in an oven, let the oven door ajar for steam to escape. The pieces should not touch or overlap. It will take 6 to 12 hours for pieces to dry. To test dryness, cool several pieces, tear in half, and check that there are no visible signs of moisture. You should not be able to squeeze any moisture from the fruit. The fruit will be pliable, but should not be sticky or tacky. Cool fruit thoroughly before packaging, but don't wait more than an hour or moisture from the air can re-enter the food.

Conditioning the fruit is the process of equalizing the moisture in the fruit. Let it set in sealed containers for 7 to 10 days. Moisture in some

pieces will be absorbed by the drier pieces. If condensation develops in the container, return the fruit to the dehydrator for more drying.

Canning Pears

While Bartlett is the commonly canned pear, Bosc, Anjou, and Comice are also suitable for canning. Seckel pears may be used in pickles and spiced products. Pears are one of the few fruits that do not ripen successfully on the tree. They ripen after they are harvested. The Northwest Pear Bureau gives these suggestions for determining ripeness and storage. Press the pear gently near the stem. If it gives to gentle pressure, it is sweet and juicy and ready to eat. Because pears ripen from the inside out, test ripeness near the stem. Waiting until pears are soft around the middle may indicate over ripeness. Store unripe pears in a warm place outside of the refrigerator in a bowl or in a paper bag. Check daily for ripeness. Ripe pears should be stored in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Pears are an ethylene producing fruit. Ethylene is a natural gas produced by the fruit that helps it to ripen, but can cause other fruits to sprout, shrivel, and decay more quickly. Therefore avoid storing pears next to unripe bananas and many vegetables that are ethylene sensitive. Pears also produce odors that may be absorbed by cabbage, carrots, celery, onion, and potatoes.

Try hot packing pears for the best quality product. It will reduce siphoning and you can pack more pears into the jar. Wash and peel pears. Cut lengthwise in halves and remove core. A melon baller or metal measuring spoon is suitable for coring pears. Hold in an ascorbic acid solution to prevent discoloration. Remove pears from the anti-darkening solution and drain well. Gently boil drained pears 5 minutes in syrup, juice or water. Pack hot pears into hot jars, leaving ½-inch headspace and fill jars ½ inch from the top with hot liquid. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process pints in a boiling water bath for 20 minutes and quarts for 25 minutes. (Make appropriate altitude adjustments.)

Herbs

The most common way of preserving herbs is to dry them. Stems of herbs such as mint, sage, or thyme can be tied (or fastened with a rubber band which tightens as the stems dry) and hung in a dry area with good air circulation. (I cover them with a paper bag punched with holes [to keep the dust off] and hang them in the air conditioned kitchen away from the moisture of the stove and sink.) Herbs with small leaves can be laid



out on cheesecloth, net, or paper towels to air dry. When dried, just strip the leaves from the stem to store. Another method for herbs with larger leaves is to remove the leaves from the stems and lay them on a paper towel without allowing the leaves to touch. When they are ready to be packaged, leaves are crispy dry and crumple easily between the fingers. Martha likes to dry parsley between layers of paper towels in the microwave oven. Herbs can also be dried in a dehydrator or in the oven at 95 to 100°F.

Herbs that are room dried or vine dried such as dill seeds need to be treated to destroy any insects or insect eggs by heating the herb at 165°F for 30 minutes or freezing the dried herb for at least 48 hours. Be sure to store herbs in an airtight container to prevent their re-absorbing moisture and to prevent their fragrance being absorbed by other foods.

Fresh herbs can be frozen to use in cooked dishes. They usually are not suitable for garnishing because the frozen product becomes limp when it thaws. Simply wrap a few sprigs or leaves in freezer wrap and place in a freezer bag. Parsley can be chopped and frozen in ice cubes for an especially fresh taste. To use, simply drop the ice cube into the soup or stew that you are making.

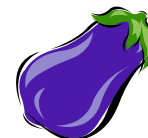
Preserving Unusual Vegetables

Have you grown any of these vegetables in your garden? Here are some suggestions for preserving some of the less commonly grown vegetables.

Eggplant can be frozen or dried. It should be harvested before the seeds become mature and when the color is uniformly dark. To prevent oxidation, wash, peel and slice 1/3-inch thick only enough eggplant for one blanching at a time. For freezing, water blanch 4 minutes in one gallon of boiling water to which ½ cup lemon juice has been added. Cool, drain and package, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze. Pack the drained slices with freezer wrap between the slices if you plan to use it for frying.

The thickened base of the kohlrabi stem is the edible portion that is used. Select stems when fully grown but tender—about 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Cut off tops and roots. Wash and peel off the tough bark. Leave whole or dice in ½ inch cubes. Water blanch whole kohlrabi 3 minutes and cubes 1 minute. Cool, drain, and package, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

Turnips can be pressure canned by hot packing sliced or diced turnips that have been



boiled 5 minutes. Allow 1-inch headspace. Process pints 30 minutes at 11 pounds pressure and quarts 35 minutes. Turnips can be frozen by water blanching ½-inch cubes for 2 minutes. Don't forget the turnip greens. They can be frozen by water blanching the young tender greens for 2 minutes.

The smooth varieties of okra freeze as well or better than the ridged varieties because they do not split as easily. Wash and remove the stems at the end of the seed cells, being careful not to expose the seed cell. Water blanch small pods 3 minutes and large pods 4 minutes. Cool promptly and drain. Leave whole or slice crosswise. Package, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze. To freeze okra for frying--after blanching, slice crosswise and dredge with cornmeal or flour. Spread in a single layer on shallow trays, freeze just long enough to become firm, and package quickly, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

All the above vegetables can be dried with fair results. Pre-treat the vegetables by steam or water blanching. Slice eggplant ¼ inch thick and steam blanch 2 to 3 minutes or water blanch ½ minute. Dipping the eggplant in an ascorbic acid or lemon juice mixture will help to maintain its color. Kohlrabi that is cubed or sliced ¼-inch thick should be water blanched 3 to 5 minutes or steam blanched 5 to 8 minutes. Okra that has been blanched for 3 to 4 minutes can be sliced 1/8 to ¼-inch thick. Most of these vegetables will take 8 to 12 hours to dry in a dehydrator set at 135°F. They are dry when they are leathery or brittle. Store these dried vegetables in an air tight container because they will draw moisture from the air very quickly.

Techniques

Testing for Sealed Jars

Most two piece lids will seal with a "pop" sound while they are cooling. In addition, check for a seal after 12 to 24 hours when the jars are completely cooled. The lid should be curved downward and should not move when pressed with a finger. Tapping the lid with a spoon should produce a clear ringing sound (unless there is food touching the underside of the lid.) If a jar is not sealed, refrigerate it and use the unspoiled food within two to three days, freeze it, or reprocess the food within 24 hours. If food is reprocessed, replace the two piece lid and process it for the complete processing time. Label food that has been re-canned and use it first. It will be softer in texture and lower in nutritional value than food processed only once.



If liquid has been lost from sealed jars do not open them to replace the liquid, but use these jars first. The food in the jar may darken because of the extra oxygen in the jar, but it will be safe if the jar is sealed.

Oxidation

Light colored fruits such as apples, pears and peaches will begin to turn dark after they are cut or peeled. Even the stem ends of cherries or grapes may darken. Ways to prevent this involve using ascorbic acid (powder or vitamin C tablets), lemon juice, or a commercial mixture containing ascorbic acid such as Fruit Fresh®. For canning hold the fruit in one of these solutions until you're ready to pack the fruit. For freezing the fruit, the ascorbic acid may be added to the syrup or sugar used to sweeten the fruit. When drying foods, the fruits are pre-treated with an ascorbic acid mixture. (See drying article.)

Freezing Questions

Is it necessary to leave head space in packages to be frozen? With the exception of vegetables that pack loosely, such as broccoli and asparagus, leave adequate head space between packed food and closure. This allows for expansion of food as it freezes.

Can food be refrozen if it has thawed?

Foods which have only partially thawed and still have ice crystals in the package can be safely refrozen. However, the quality will be poorer.

Will food spoil if it is held longer than the recommended storage time. No. The recommended storage time is the time in which food should be used to insure maximum quality. Food stored longer than recommended time is safe but will begin to have a decrease in flavor, color, and texture.

How can you be sure that the freezer is at 0°F or less? Purchase a freezer thermometer (one that can withstand a wide range of temperatures), keep it in the freezer and check the temperature regularly.

Why is it necessary to cool vegetables after blanching? Vegetables should be cooled quickly and thoroughly after blanching to stop the cooking process. Otherwise, vegetables will be overcooked with loss of flavor, color, vitamins and minerals.

Can vegetables be fully cooked before freezing? Some fully cooked vegetables, such as baked beans and candied sweet potatoes, maintain high quality for many months when frozen. Most fully cooked vegetables, however, have less desirable color, aroma and flavor when reheated. Loss of flavor

may be retarded by covering the vegetable with cooking liquid, meat broth or cream sauce.

Can stuffed turkey be frozen? Stuffing should be frozen separately from the turkey. With any food, the time needed for freezing to take place in the center of the item is the critical factor.

Source: So Easy to Preserve

Special Events

4-H Food Preservation Project



The 4-H program offers a food preservation project. Because of the specialized nature of the project, we recognize the difficulty of offering it at the community club level. If there is enough interest from 4-H'ers over the county, we will offer the Jams and Jellies project during the spring and summer of 2004 at the Farm and Home Center. This project covers the basics of boiling water bath canning as well as making cooked and freezer jams, jellies, and conserves with and without added pectin. 4-H'ers enrolling in this project should have completed three levels of 4-H foods or have basic cooking skills and should be age 13 or over. If you know of someone who is interested, have them contact Martha Zepp or Katina Showman at 394-6851 by January 15, 2004.

Preparing Canned Goods for the Bazaar

If your group is thinking of making some extra money by selling canned goods at your church bazaar or fundraiser, there are a few things to consider. Although such one-time activities are not regulated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, food sanitarians have made these recommendations:

- Prepare the canned goods at the church or in another licensed commercial facility that has been inspected by local health inspectors or the Department of Agriculture rather than in your home.
- The water supply should be from an approved source, such as a community water supply or well water that has been tested annually for coliform bacteria and nitrates.
- Limit your food preparation to jams and jellies or acidified foods (pickled products). Do not prepare untested salsa, canned vegetables and fruits, or meat products such as mincemeat.
- Use a standard, tested recipe, not one of your family recipes. Keep a copy of the recipe on file. Use standard measurements and follow the recipe exactly.
- Process all foods in a boiling water bath for the time recommended by USDA guidelines.

- Sell foods in mason jars that have been sealed with new 2-piece canning lids.
- Remove the rings on the sealed jars to test the vacuum seal, the lid should be concave. (You may replace the ring when you sell the product).
- Label the food with the name of the product, name and address of the manufacturer (your group), the weight of the contents (i.e. 8oz.) and a list of the ingredients and date prepared.
- Keep a record of the product prepared, date and ingredients used. This would also be a good place to keep a note about how many jars were canned and how many sold as well as anecdotal notes about how it tasted and recommendations for resale.

Good sources for tested recipes are:

- The Penn State Food Preservation Web site: <http://foodsafety.cas.psu.edu>
- National Center for Home Food Preservation at <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp>
- Your local Cooperative Extension office

If you are interested in starting a small business canning your family recipes, there are some specific regulations that need to be followed. For additional information about this type of entrepreneurship, contact the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at 717-346-3223. Penn State also has a wealth of information about the small food processors and entrepreneurs at http://foodsafety.cas.psu.edu/processor/ent_res_text2.htm

Resources:

National Center for Food Entrepreneurship: The purpose of this center is to provide comprehensive assistance to beginning and established food entrepreneurs, thus promoting sustainable economic development of rural communities <http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/index.html>

Food Preservation Workshops

All workshops will be held in the Extension Training Room, which is located on the lower level of the Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster, PA.

Cost for each workshop is \$5.00. Make check payable to: *Agricultural Extension*.



The Art and Science of Drying Foods

You don't have to have special equipment to dry food. Learn

basic methods of drying including oven drying, using a dehydrator, microwave drying, and air-drying. Ideas for using dehydrated foods will be included.

Date: Tuesday, September 23, 2003

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Instructor: Martha Zepp

Wild Game Meat Food Safety



This workshop includes information on inspecting game animals for disease, updated information on field dressing and handling of wild game, and proper processing to prevent food borne illness. With deer season

occurring earlier in the fall and warm weather likely, it is more important than ever for hunters to handle game meat properly. Warm conditions have the potential to cause more food borne illness, especially when hunters improperly handle or process their deer.

Date: Monday, September 29, 2003

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Instructors: Nancy Wiker, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, and John Zook, Wildlife Conservation Officer

Extra Special



Nothing is as special as a gift you have made yourself. These unique recipes are ready at a moment's notice to share with family and friends. This workshop will include ideas for extra special home preserved

fancy foods and nifty packaging tricks.

Date: Thursday, October 23, 2003

Time: 9:30 – 11:30 am or 7:00 – 9:00 pm.

Instructor: Nancy Wiker

Where trade names appear, no discrimination is intended, and no endorsement by Penn State Cooperative Extension is implied.

Penn State encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact **Nancy Wiker** at 717-394-6851 in advance of your participation or visit.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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Workshop Title _____
Time: _____
Cost _____
Name _____
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(Work) _____

Send completed form with payment to: *Workshops*, Penn State Cooperative Extension, 1383 Arcadia Rd., Room 1, Lancaster, PA 17601-3184.