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GARDENING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Save It Now, Savor It Later

Time: 70 Minutes

The earliest recorded methods of food preservation date back to prehistoric times but are still relevant today. You can preserve foods inexpensively by using canning, freezing or drying methods. For example, grow your own fruits and vegetables to save money, and then preserve them to enjoy year-round.

OBJECTIVES:

- Describe why food preservation is important.
- Identify three common food preservation methods.
- Demonstrate two food preservation techniques: freezing and drying.

SETUP

- Review the resource list and print it out.
- Set up demo station with the necessary resources and samples.
- Provide computer, internet access and projector, if available.

INTRO (10 Minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- Take care of any housekeeping items (closest bathroom, water fountain, etc.).
- Give a brief description of the educational experience.
- Ask the participants if they have tried freezing, canning or drying foods to preserve them. What was their experience? What would they like to learn about preserving foods?
(Give everyone a chance to speak.)

DEMO (40 Minutes)

- Play video(s) and present content (see demo script).

RECAP (10 Minutes)

- Pass out handout(s) and review them with participants.

GOAL SETTING/CLOSING (10 Minutes)

- Engage in a goal setting activity from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#).
- Pass out the Setting SMART Goals handout to participants.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



NOTES: Read legal liability disclaimer before activity: [Food Liability Disclaimer](#). Refer to Resource List for all necessary supplies and handouts. This Healthy for Life® Educational Experience was created by Aramark and the American Heart Association as part of our Healthy for Life® Initiative. We are proud to be working together to help improve the health of all Americans.

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Save It Now, Savor It Later Resource List

HANDOUTS/VIDEOS

Find these resources on AHA's YouTube channel or heart.org/healthyforgood

- ❑ Video – [How to Make DIY Dried Fruit](#)
- ❑ Video – [How to Freeze Foods and Avoid Freezer Burn](#)
- ❑ Video – [How to Blanch Vegetables](#)
- ❑ Video – [How to Freeze Your Fresh Herbs](#)

Find these resources in this lesson:

- ❑ Handout – [Canning Resources Online](#)
- ❑ Handout – [Setting SMART Goals](#)

SPACE SETUP

- ❑ Chairs for participants
- ❑ Demo table
- ❑ Computer, internet access, and projector, if available

DEMONSTRATION SUPPLIES

Samples of items used for freezing foods:

- ❑ Plastic containers
- ❑ Glass jars
- ❑ Zip-top freezer bags
- ❑ Heavy aluminum foil
- ❑ Freezer tape
- ❑ Labels and markers
- ❑ Plastic ice cube tray with lid for freezing herbs or small quantities of foods

Save It Now, Savor It Later Demo Script

WHAT IS FOOD PRESERVATION?



SAY:

Today we're going to talk about something people have been doing since prehistoric times — preserving foods so they can be stored and used longer.



By nature, food begins to spoil the moment it's harvested. Food preservation enabled our ancient ancestors to settle in one place and develop communities, without the burden of constantly seeking fresh food to survive.



Preserving food allows us to extend its shelf life — or how long it can safely be consumed — without losing its nutritional value and taste. Fresh foods spoil or lose their quality for a few key reasons:

- growth of bacteria, molds and yeasts,
- activity of natural enzymes,
- reactions with oxygen,
- and moisture loss.

BENEFITS



SAY:

Food preservation has many benefits, including:

- It can save you money.
- You can buy foods in bulk when they're in season and enjoy them year-round.
- You can use all of the harvest if you're growing your own foods.
- You can prepare food in larger quantities and store it for later use, which saves time.
- It reduces food waste, which has an impact on our environment as well as hunger issues. Preserving foods can help make our food supply more sustainable.

METHODS



SAY:

Some of the most common methods of food preservation have been around for a long time. We'll learn more about three of them today: drying, canning and freezing. Other methods include fermenting, pickling, smoking and curing. Let's start with drying, also called dehydrating.



Drying

In ancient times people dried foods like meats, fruits and vegetables using heat from the sun or a fire to reduce the water or moisture in them.



Drying is an effective method of preserving food without much loss of nutritional value. However, it can change the taste and appearance of the food.



Today we can dry foods at home using a food dehydrator or even a regular oven. It's easy and cost-effective to dry ripe and just-over-ripe fruits and vegetables, and they make great healthy snacks!



Looking for an alternative to sugary packaged fruit snacks like fruit gummies and roll-ups? This video will show just how easy it can be to make your own dried fruit snacks the kids will love.

Play video: [How to Make DIY Dried Fruit](#)



You can make your own fruit roll-ups or "leathers" using pureed fresh, canned or frozen fruit. Find recipes online — but make sure they don't include added sugars!



Canning

Now let's talk about canning.



Canning is a process of sealing food or liquid in a jar or can, heating it and then cooling it. This creates a vacuum seal that protects the contents.



Canning is an effective food preservation method but may be time-consuming. Also, specific processes must be followed to ensure food safety. Food must be properly sterilized, packed and sealed in airtight containers to prevent contamination. Improperly canned foods and liquids can cause a deadly foodborne illness called botulism.



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides a Complete Guide to Home Canning online. We've included a link to this resource and others in your handouts today.

Save It Now, Savor It Later Demo Script (continued)



Freezing

Freezing is one of the easiest and best methods for preserving your homegrown produce's flavor, color, quality and nutrients. And you probably already have all the tools you need.



It was an obvious preservation method for early humans in cold climates. Meat and fish could be set out on the ice to freeze. Eventually icehouses were built to store food on ice. These became iceboxes inside the home with the invention of mechanical refrigeration.



Today we can freeze foods quickly and easily at home with a standard freezer or deep freezer.



To freeze food its temperature must be lowered to 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Proper preparation and packaging are important to prevent contamination or spoilage.



Let's watch a video now on how to freeze foods to avoid freezer burn and maintain freshness and flavor.

Play video: [How to Freeze Foods and Avoid Freezer Burn](#)



Here are more tips on freezing from the National Center for Home Food Preservation:

- Not all produce freezes well. A few types that don't are cabbage, celery, cucumbers, lettuce, parsley and radishes.
- Some spices and seasonings can change flavor, become stronger or get bitter when frozen. And salt loses its flavor. So it's best to season very lightly, if at all, before freezing. You can add seasonings when reheating.
- Chill cooked foods and liquids quickly before packaging and freezing. You can do this by refrigerating it loosely covered in shallow pans or putting it in a metal or glass bowl and setting the bowl in an ice bath (a larger bowl filled halfway with ice water) and stirring it occasionally. But don't leave cooked food out at room temperature for more than two hours

or it will begin to spoil. Keep refrigerator temperature at 40 F or below and freezer temperature at 0 F.

- Allow a bit of headspace between the food and the top of the container when packing foods for freezing. The amount of space will vary depending on the width of the container and whether the food is dry or liquid, from about a half inch to an inch and a half.
- Don't freeze foods in containers larger than a half-gallon. It's easier to pack foods in quantities that will be used for a single meal or recipe.
- Freeze foods as soon as they are packed and sealed in airtight, leak-proof, freezer-friendly containers.
- For example, zip-top freezer bags and heavy aluminum foil work well with most foods. Remove as much air as possible before sealing. **(Show examples)**
- Rigid plastic containers should be freezer safe. "Mason" jars made for freezing and canning may be used, but regular glass jars can break easily. **(Show examples)**
- Covers should fit tightly. If they don't, you can use freezer tape to reinforce the seal. **(Show example)**
- Label each package with the name of the food, packing date, and any other important information such as added ingredients or reheating instructions. Use tape, markers or labels made for freezer use. **(Show examples)**
- Don't overload your freezer with unfrozen food; it will slow down the freezing rate. A package two inches thick should freeze completely in about two hours. Never stack packages to be frozen. Instead, spread them out in one layer on various shelves, and stack them only after frozen solid. However, a full freezer is more efficient than a nearly empty one, so make sure you're harvesting and freezing often!
- A good policy is "first in, first out." Place newer items behind or below older ones so it's easier to use the older ones first.

Save It Now, Savor It Later Demo Script (continued)



Blanching before freezing

We heard about blanching in the video. Almost all vegetables should be blanched before they're frozen. Blanching means cooking in boiling water or steam for a short time. It has several benefits:

- It stops natural enzyme actions which can cause loss of flavor, color and texture. (This is why the color of blanched veggies gets brighter.)
- It cleans the surface of dirt and organisms that could contaminate the food.
- It helps retain vitamins and nutrients.
- It also wilts or softens the vegetables, making them easier to pack for freezing.



Blanching time is crucial and will vary from about two to seven minutes depending on the size of the vegetable or pieces.



Here's a quick video demonstrating how to blanch vegetables.

Play video: [How to Blanch Vegetables](#)



Blanching is also great for some firmer fruits, such as apples and pears. A few vegetables, such as diced and green onions, peppers and tomatoes, don't have to be blanched before freezing. Experiment to discover what gives you the best result.



Freezing fresh herbs

In addition to fruits and vegetables, fresh herbs from the garden are a real treat in the spring and summer. By learning how to freeze them, you can enjoy their flavor year-round and avoid wasting any of their green goodness.

Let's watch a short video with some handy techniques for freezing herbs.

Play video: [How to Freeze Your Fresh Herbs](#)



How long will frozen produce last?

As we learned in the earlier video, you'll want to use frozen foods within about six months to avoid freezer burn. But this can vary depending upon:

- the type of food,
- whether it was blanched properly,
- the material it's stored in,

- and whether the freezer has stayed at or below zero degrees Fahrenheit.



The longer food is stored in the freezer, the lower the quality will be when thawed or reheated. When fruits and vegetables are frozen and stored properly, they can last up to 12 months. This means you can enjoy your garden-fresh produce throughout the winter!



Thawing and using frozen produce

Food must be kept at a safe temperature while thawing or defrosting. Never thaw food on the counter or in warm water. Instead, defrost in the refrigerator at 40 degrees or less, under cold running water less than 70 degrees in a leak-proof package, or in the microwave if you'll be cooking and serving it immediately.



Thawing in the refrigerator takes time and you'll need to plan ahead. Using the microwave can result in uneven heating and some parts of the food may start cooking before others are completely thawed.



Frozen fruits and vegetables may take six to eight hours to thaw in the refrigerator. Most vegetables do not have to be thawed if they will be cooked immediately.



Frozen fruits are a great healthy addition to yogurt or cereal. Frozen veggies are easy to sneak in to prepared foods and dishes like soups, stews, casseroles, pasta, beans and rice. Simply throw them in as the food is cooking. And both fruits and vegetables can make homemade smoothies deliciously healthy and easy.

RECAP



SAY:

Today we've learned a lot about a few of the most common food preservation methods: drying, canning and freezing. Because of the unique challenges and safety issues of canning, we've provided a handout with more resources for you to learn how to safely can produce at home. And I hope the video demonstrations we saw will inspire you to try drying and freezing fresh fruits and vegetables. They're both good ways to enjoy fresh produce from the garden all year long.

Canning Resources Online

If you're new to canning or haven't canned foods in a while, use these resources to be sure you're following the most up-to-date safety guidelines.

CDC Home Canning and Botulism:
www.cdc.gov/features/homecanning

FDA Canning Tips:
www.fda.gov/media/107843/download

National Center for Home Food Preservation – Canning:
nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_home.html

USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning:
nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html



SPECIFIC

- What exactly do you want to accomplish?

MEASURABLE

- How will you track your progress towards your goal?

ACHIEVABLE

- Is reaching your goal possible with your full effort?

REALISTIC

- Do you have the resources and ability to achieve your goal?
If not, how can you get them?

TIME-BOUND

- When will your goal be achieved?

EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL:

I will increase the number of fruit servings I eat daily by 2 cups within the next 3 months.

Personal SMART goal:
