

Preserve for Health
By Ora Emmerich
UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers
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Today, more Americans than ever fall prey to diabetes, obesity and heart disease. These food related conditions stem from overconsumption of fats, sugars and calories. Additives such as antibiotics and hormones affect everyone, from children to adults. Many people turn to homegrown fruits and vegetables, organic foods and grass-fed meat animals to get back control of ingredients in food.

However, as a society, Americans have become accustomed to the fast life. Want a new book by a favorite author? Push a button on the Kindle and begin reading in less than a minute. What is the GDP of Australia? Check the internet and find out in seconds. Need some dinner? The fast food attendant will peel, slice and fry the potatoes, grind, press and cook the burger, wash, tear and add the lettuce and mix up a drink to wash it all down with in less time that it takes to drive to the front of the line. Never mind that this dinner contains more fat, sugar and calories than the government has determined the average person should consume in one day. How can a person regain control of the food supply without sacrificing time or health?

Home preserved food allows for individual determination of content without requiring hours in the kitchen for each meal. A well-stocked pantry and a full freezer make short work of putting together a healthy alternative to the drive-through lane. Vegetables and fruits picked at the peak of freshness and preserved without added fats cook up quickly. Soups and sauces, opened and heated, compliment the fresh tasting foods. That grass-fed beef, ground, mixed with spices, and frozen in patties, goes right from freezer to grill for scrumptious burgers in no time. Dehydrated organic strawberries finish the day with a sweet snack that no one turns down.

As spring approaches and garden plans get underway, consider planting with preserving in mind. Home canned spaghetti sauce, soups, and pickled foods require specific vegetables, so make sure to plant the proper types and amounts. Browse the internet and look for tested recipes on sites such as the University of Georgia's National Center for Home Food Preservation, (nchfp.uga.edu), University of California, Davis (ucanr.org), Washington State University, (ext.wsu.edu) and the Oregon State University (extension.oregon.edu). Also, the Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County offer free public education classes. Sign up for the E- Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/> to receive information about the classes, which begin in the summer.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/.