

July 5, 2017



Snacks on the Go

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We all know what it's like to be traveling with children, or just having a long day of running errands and not wanting to take the time to stop to eat or haul an ice chest around. Having healthy, easy to prepare homemade snacks that don't require refrigeration can make busy days so much easier. These snack ideas are also great to just have on hand at home as well.

With just a few ingredients and minimal preparation time, you can create snacks your family will enjoy using their favorite foods. Here are some ideas to try.

Homemade Trail Mix

A basic recipe for trail mix is 50% nuts of your choice, 30% dried chopped fruit, 10% seeds and 10% chef's choice. Use roasted or raw nuts, salted or unsalted, based on your preference. Use dehydrated fruit of your choice as the low moisture content will allow your trail mix to be stored. Seeds like pumpkin, sunflower, chia, and flax can also be roasted or raw, salted or unsalted. For sweet and salty treat, add shredded coconut, or small candies like M&Ms or carob chips.

Fruit Leather

If you have some ripe or slightly overripe fruit, puree it and make fruit leather! For light colored fruit, add 2 teaspoons of lemon juice for each 2 cups to prevent darkening. If you want to add sweeteners, add corn syrup, honey or sugar. (Corn syrup or honey is best for longer storage because it prevents crystals.) Use $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sweetener for each 2 cups of fruit. The fastest drying method is to use an electric dehydrator tray with special liners or plastic wrap. Spread the puree evenly, about 1/8-inch thick, onto drying tray, keeping it away from the edge of the tray.

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Dry at 140°F for 6 to 8 hours. Leather dries from the outside edge toward the center. Test for dryness by touching center of the fruit leather; no indentation should be evident. While warm, peel from plastic and roll, allow to cool and rewrap the roll in plastic. Use cookie cutters to cut out shapes that children will enjoy. Roll, and wrap in plastic. Chances are the fruit leather will not last long enough for storage. If it does, it will keep up to 1 month at room temperature. For storage up to 1 year, place tightly wrapped rolls in the freezer. (*Recipe from National Center for Home Food Preservation at http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/dry/fruit_leathers.html.*)

Fruit and Veggie Chips

Replace greasy potato chips with fruit and veggie chips. Zucchini, strawberries and apples make easy and tasty dried chips. Thin, uniform, peeled slices dry the fastest.

Pretreat apples with an ascorbic acid product to prevent browning. Because fruits contain sugar and are sticky, spray the drying trays with nonstick cooking spray before placing the fruit chips on the trays. After the fruit chips dry for one to two hours, lift each piece gently with a spatula and turn. Fruits are dry when about 20% of their moisture remains; the fruit is pliable and leathery, but not tacky and doesn't stick to itself when folded in half. The moisture in fruit may not be distributed evenly in the dried pieces, so before you put it in the cupboard for long-term storage, put the freshly dried fruit in a sealed jar and shake the jar daily to separate the pieces and check for moisture condensation. This final process is called conditioning the fruit. The final product is sweet and chewy; nature's candy.

Sprinkle your favorite spice mix on zucchini slices for a burst of flavor. Zucchini chips are sufficiently dry when they are brittle or crisp, containing about 10% moisture. Because they are so dry, they don't need to be conditioned.

Want to learn more about dehydration and making dried snacks? Join the UCCE Master Food Preservers for their Snacks on the Go class, on Saturday, July 15 from 9-Noon at the Bethel-Delfino Agricultural Building at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. The class is free and no reservations are required.

UCCE Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506 or email us at edmfp@ucanr.edu. For more information about our program and events, visit our website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmfp>. Sign up to receive our E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>. Find us on Facebook too (UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County)!