

Persimmons, Kiwis and Nuts
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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) have teamed up with other health organizations to sponsor a new health initiative called “Fruits & Veggies — More Matters™.” This new program replaces “Five a Day,” and its organizers plan to continue educating consumers about the health benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables. Lucky for us, the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters™ fruit of the month just happens to be...persimmons! Even luckier, the Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County take up the topic of Persimmons, Kiwis and Nuts at the free public classes offered on October 26 and repeated on October 30.

The Fruits & Veggies — More Matters™ website offers this advice on choosing persimmons: “Choose persimmons with deep red undertones. Look for persimmons that are round, plump, and have glossy and smooth skin. Avoid fruits with blemishes, bruises or cracked skin and missing the green leaves at the top. Select ripe persimmons only if you plan to eat them immediately. Otherwise, buy firmer fruits and allow them to ripen.”

The Master Food Preservers explain step-by-step the various methods of preserving persimmons, kiwis and nuts. Persimmons may be frozen, dehydrated or made into jam or jelly. Freezing keeps most of the nutrients, although air-drying may be the most fun way of preserving the delicious persimmon. The fruit to be air-dried must be very firm and have a long stem. Tie the stems to string and hang the peeled fruit for about a week. Then, the fun begins. The persimmons get the spa treatment. The soft fruit must be massaged every day until completely limp. When almost dry, the persimmons are brought in and placed in a cool, dark place for a rest. Sugar crystals will form on the outside of the persimmon, which can then be placed in the freezer for storage and to make sure that the fruit does not become too dry. Complete instructions for air-drying persimmons will be available at the Master Food Preserver free public classes.

Did you know that you can eat the fuzzy skin on a kiwi? Yep. If you want to. If not, you can cut off the top and bottom of the fruit, then remove the skin from the sides with a vegetable peeler or a knife. Kiwi fruit provides a burst of beautiful green color to any fruit salad, and may also be used as a meat tenderizer. This gorgeous fruit contains Actinidin, an enzyme that breaks down protein in meat and dairy products. Just cut the kiwi in half and rub the fruit on the meat. Leave on for 15 minutes or longer to tenderize. Kiwis taste scrumptious in jelly or jam, and can be combined with other fruits for many interesting flavors.

If you have access to a nut tree you will not want to miss the Master Food Preservers’ class. Learn how to harvest, hull and dry these delicacies. Nuts can be oven dried or sun dried, and will keep for over a year in the freezer. Butters from nuts turn plain bread into delicious sandwiches, and if you add a bit of persimmon or kiwi jam, you have the ever-popular PB&J. How about whipping up a delicious treat to enjoy while watching the Forty-Niners play football? Here is a recipe from the El Dorado Master Food Preservers’ Files:

Sugar and Spice Nuts

1 tablespoon melted butter or margarine
1 egg white, slightly beaten
2 cups untoasted almonds, walnuts, and/or pecans
1 cup sugar
½ teaspoon salt
1 ½ teaspoons cinnamon
¾ teaspoon nutmeg
¾ teaspoon allspice

Preheat oven to 300° F. Slowly stir melted butter or margarine into beaten egg white. Stir in nuts. Mix sugar and spices. Spread about one fourth of the sugar mixture in a 10 x 15 inch shallow baking pan. Coat a few nuts at a time in remaining sugar mixture, and arrange in the pan. Sprinkle rest of sugar mixture over nuts. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until nuts are lightly browned. Remove nuts from oven; stir gently to separate nuts. Cool. Store tightly in an airtight container. Contains about 35 calories per tablespoon. Makes about 2 pints. (Source: El Dorado-Master Food Preservers files)

The Persimmons, Kiwis and Nuts class is October 26th and 30th. All classes are held from 10 a.m. to noon in the Bethell-Delfino Agriculture Building at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Master Food Preservers are also available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506. For more information about the public education classes and activities, go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/.