



UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County

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Dehydrating Herbs

By Geny Cassady

UCCE Master Food Preserver of El Dorado County

Spring brings the beginning of the growing season in our area. You might be planning your garden or even already starting seedlings inside. With all of your vegetables, be sure to include some herbs. They are easy enough for the beginning gardener to grow and perfect for preservation later in the summer. Preserving herbs couldn't be easier and they impart such a fantastic array of flavors to your dishes.

Once your herbs are ready for harvest, you should pick them in the morning after the dew has evaporated but before the sun has a chance to wilt the leaves. Bring your freshly harvested herbs inside, give them a good rinse with cool water, and a gentle shake to remove any excess moisture. Now you are free to use them immediately in your cooking or preserve them for use later in the year.

Drying herbs is one of the easiest and most cost effective way to preserve them. You will save so much versus costly grocery store herbs. More sturdy herbs such as rosemary, sage, thyme, summer savory, and parsley can easily be dried in small bundles and hung in a dry environment. There are also drying racks with hooks or small clips you can purchase just for drying these herbs.

More tender leaf herb varieties such as basil, oregano, tarragon, lemon balm and mint can also be dried easily. First, cut a few holes in the side of a paper bag. Then suspend small bundles in the bag and hang in an area with good air circulation. The herbs will be dry in 1-2 weeks; they should crumble to the touch when thoroughly dry.

Now that you have these dried herbs, add them to your favorite recipes. Remember, dried herbs are about 3-4 times stronger than fresh, so adjust your quantities accordingly.

Anxious to hear about dehydrating everything from herbs to meat? If so, plan to attend one of the UCCE Master Food Preserver workshops, “All Dried Up! Dehydrating and Freezing.” They will be presented on Wednesday, April 27th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Cameron Park Community Center and again on July 26th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds Board Room.

Download the local 2016 UCCE Master Food Preserver schedule of classes and workshops on our main website. We offer some new events this year. In addition to our free preserving classes in Placerville and Auburn, we now provide classes in Cameron Park at the Cameron Park Community Center and several all day, hands-on workshops in Placerville.

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

Should you need assistance or require special accommodations for any of our educational programs, please contact us at 530-621-5502.

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