



MASTER FOOD PRESERVERS - NOT JUST CANNING

By Sue Hale

UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County

This is the time of year when our gardens are really producing and it's also a time to get great deals at farmers markets. The problem is, we can only consume so much fresh produce. Fortunately we have many different ways to preserve our foods.

UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County provide a series of free classes to teach us how to safely preserve foods at home – and this is not just canning. We can also freeze, dehydrate, pickle, ferment, cure and smoke foods to have a wider variety of foods year round. Join the Master Food Preservers on Tuesday, September 16th and Saturday, September 20th for a free class where the MFPs will share recipes and techniques for safe home dehydrating and freezing. Some foods are more suited to certain types of preserving and people also have different preferences – freezing vs canning. It's nice to have options and know the different ways to preserve foods.

Food drying is one of the oldest methods of preserving food for later use. Drying removes the moisture from the food so bacteria, yeast and mold cannot grow and spoil the food. Drying also slows down, but does not deactivate, the action of enzymes (naturally occurring substances which cause foods to ripen and spoil).

Some foods that are more suitable for dehydrating are apples, blueberries, grapes, cherries, peaches, pears, figs, plums, apricots, beets, corn, potatoes, cabbage, green peas, carrots, mushrooms, tomatoes, celery, turnips, onions, and green peppers. You may also dehydrate some fresh meat, in the form of jerky.

Foods that do not dehydrate well are those that are very high in moisture such as blackberries, oranges, lemons, cantaloupe, rhubarb, lettuce, spinach, and radishes.

Dehydrating/drying is something I am trying to practice more often. The idea is to dry stuff while it is still fresh. All too often I will go into my veggie drawer and find a not so fresh bag of herbs for which I had good intentions. I am now paying attention and when I know I will not use

all of that fresh mint, for example, I dry it for later. This is also a good practice to get into with celery, onions, peppers carrots – all those things you may get in bulk and not use before it goes bad. Figure out what you will use and dehydrate the rest! Then it is on hand and ready to go later when you are short on time. Dehydrated veggies are great for winter soups.

Dried cooked meats are often used by backpackers and campers where the weight of canned meat is a disadvantage or refrigeration is not available. The storage life of cooked meats dried at home is less than 2 weeks.

Here is an easy and tasty recipe to prepare and take along for your next camping trip:

Spaghetti Sauce Mix

Basic recipe:

- 2 tablespoons dried onions
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 3 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon dried green peppers
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon dried garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- 1 cup tomato powder
- ¼ cup dried, sliced mushrooms

Additions:

- ¼ cup dried ground meat (store separately due to shorter shelf life)

Mix all the ingredients and store in a tightly sealed container. To prepare sauce, add 3 cups water to mix and simmer until thick.

This year's annual series of FREE classes are on both Tuesday's and Saturday's from 10 a.m. to noon in the El Dorado County Fairground's Boardroom at 100 Placerville Drive in Placerville. Download our schedule of classes and directions here:

http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/Classes/.

Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message on our hotline - (530) 621-5506. For more information about the public education classes and activities, go to the UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County website at http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/El-Dorado-County-Master-Food-Preservers/456649991034665>.