

The Master Food Preserver Program Is Here!

By Andrea Peck UCCE Master Gardener and Christine Nelson UCCE Master Food Preserver Coordinator

Do you have an overabundance of fruits and vegetables?

If you're a regular reader of the Master Gardener's articles, you know we strive to help SLO County residents become more proficient gardeners. We are now pleased to introduce you to our sister program, the UCCE Master Food Preserver (MFP) program. The MFP program provides scientifically based, food safety and preservation information and techniques. Master Gardeners will show you how to grow it and MFPs will teach you how to preserve it.

There has been a resurging public interest in food preservation, which has grown alongside "buy local," and "farm-to-table" movements. However, food preservation has also become something of a lost art and is not commonly practiced in the home. As residents have become more interested in home food preservation, the need for education on safe food preservation practices was evident. The MFP program in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties will teach community members how to reduce food waste, maximize their food resources, and create safe, consumable food products.

The MFP program offers a free helpline and will hold monthly workshops. The helpline is staffed by certified MFPs and is available to answer inquiries related to class schedules, freezing, canning, drying, food preservation recipes and resources, and how to become a Master Food Preserver. The helpline number is 805-781-1429 and is staffed on Wednesdays from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Workshops are scheduled for the 4th Saturday of each month from 10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. in the UCCE Auditorium located at 2156 Sierra Way, San Luis Obispo. The next workshop will be held on Saturday, February 28th and will focus on stretching your food budget. Participants will learn how to properly freeze food to prevent freezer burn, as well as make delicious dehydrated snacks. *Registration is required.*

For more information about the workshops or to register, please contact Christine Nelson at (805) 781-5944 or cinelson@co.slo.ca.us.

For a fun and informative test of your canning skills, visit <http://ucanr.edu/canningquiz>.