

FCS Newsline

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Home Food Preservation Extends Fresh Taste of Summer

Now that spring has officially arrived, many Oklahomans are outdoors tilling their gardens and planting a variety of tasty vegetables.

Often times, however, gardeners are faced with an overabundance of produce. Of course they can give some of it away, but there is a way they can enjoy that fresh, homegrown flavor well beyond the growing season, said Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension food specialist.

“Home food preservation is a great way to extend the fresh taste of summer,” Brown said. “Many home-grown vegetables can be frozen. However, proper preservation techniques must be followed in order to enjoy peak flavor, as well as ensure food safety.”

Chemical changes take place when vegetables are frozen. The key is to slow down the enzymes in the food. Enzymes are proteins that are present in plants and animals and they help speed up the ripening and maturing processes. Enzyme reactions can continue even after plants are harvested. This can result in undesirable color, flavor and texture changes in the food.

Brown said freezing slows down, but does not destroy, enzymes in fruits and vegetables.

“This is why it’s important to stop enzyme activity before freezing. Enzymes in

vegetables are inactivated by blanching,” she said.

The blanching process includes placing the vegetables in boiling water or steam for a short period of time. Next, cool the vegetables rapidly in ice water. This prevents the vegetables from cooking further and will help them maintain color, flavor and texture.

Blanching also helps destroy microorganisms on the surface of vegetables. It makes vegetables such as broccoli and spinach more compact, and

as a result, they take up less space in the freezer. Be sure to follow the recommended time for blanching each vegetable. Over-blanching will result in a cooked product and loss of flavor.

“Under blanching speeds up enzyme activity and is worse than not blanching vegetables at all,” Brown said.

For home freezing, the most satisfactory way to heat all vegetables is in boiling water. Use a blancher with a blanching basket and cover, or fit a wire basket into a large pot with a lid. Use one gallon of water for each pound of prepared vegetables.

Place the vegetables in the blanching basket and lower into vigorously boiling water. Place a lid on the blancher. Water should return to boiling within one minute. If it does not, you are using too much

vegetable for the amount of boiling water. Start blanching time as soon as the water returns to a boil. Blanch for proper amount of time for each type of vegetable.

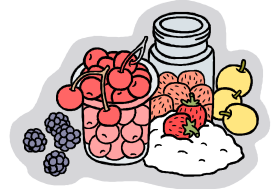
Steam blanching involves holding the food at least three inches above the bottom of the pot of boiling water. Put one or two inches of water in the pot and bring to a boil. Be sure to place vegetables in the basket in a single layer so the steam reaches all parts quickly. Steam blanching takes about one and a half times longer than water blanching.

Brown said microwave blanching may not be effective since research has shown that some enzymes may not be inactivated. This could result in off-flavors and loss of texture and color.

“Although home food preservation can take some time, the flavorful benefits you’ll get will be worth the effort,” she said.

FOOD PRESERVATION/ CANNING WORKSHOP

A food preservation/canning workshop will be presented in Ottawa County sometime in early summer. Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Food Specialist will be presenting the workshop. Watch for details that will be available soon!



If you would like to have your pressure cooker tested. Bring the lid with the gauge attached by the OSU Extension office and we can test it for accuracy .

Kathy Enyart,
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Knowing what each type of dating on products means will help with food safety questions.

What do Food Product Dates Mean?

If the date on the label of the food product you are about to consume is outdated, should you eat it? Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension food safety specialist, said there are different types of dating on products and knowing what each means will help consumers answer their food safety questions.

Open dating on a food product is a date stamped on the package to assist the store in determining how long to display the product for sale. An open date can also help the purchaser to know the time limit to purchase or use the product at its best quality. It is not a safety date and after the date passes the product should still be safe if handled properly.

The USDA recommends products

should be kept at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below or for the recommended storage time. By federal regulations product dating is not required except for infant formula and some baby food.

Open dating is primarily found on perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products. Other types of dates include:

- Sell-by date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. The product should be bought before this date expires.
- Best if used by (or before) date is recommended for best flavor or quality. This is not a purchase or safety date.
- Use-by date is the last date recommended for use of the product while at peak quality. This date is determined

by the manufacturer of the product.

- Closed or coded dates are packing numbers used by the manufacturer. These usually appear on shelf-stable products such as cans and boxes of food.

If product dates are not a guide for safe use of a product, how do consumers know how long to store the product and still use it at top quality? Products should be purchased before the date expires. Also remember if the food is perishable take it home immediately after purchase and refrigerate it promptly or freeze it if you can't use it within the recommended time. Once a perishable item is frozen, it doesn't matter if the date expires because frozen foods are continuously safe.

Barbecued Meat Judging Class Set Register Now

The Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center at OSU is hosting a class to teach participants how to judge barbecued meats. The event will take place Saturday, April 25, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on the second floor of the FAPC. Ed Roith of the Kansas City Barbeque Society will teach the class, which is \$60 for KCBS members and \$85 for non-members. To register for the event, call or e-mail Karen Smith at (405) 744-6071 or karenl.smith@okstate.edu, or register online at www.fapc.biz/bbqclass.html. The registration deadline is Monday, April 13.

County Fair Volunteers

The Ottawa County Fair will be here before we know it. It takes many volunteers to help make it a successful event.

We are needing additional help with the open class indoor exhibits. If you can donate an hour, 2 hours, a half a day or maybe the

entire day...we would love to have your help!

We need superintendents and assistants. We need help with entering entries, assisting with the judging and displaying the entries. If you are interested, please call the OSU Extension Office (542-

1688) and let us know.

The Ottawa County Fair will be August 16-22. Monday, August 17th will be when the indoor exhibits are entered and judged with the exception of the canning items that are judged on Tuesday morning.



County Fair Judges Training

Tuesday, June 2, 2009

Jenks Middle School

Open to anyone who is interested in judging at county fairs. By attending the training you are showing that you are willing to be called upon to be a judge in fairs in other counties. You will have your name added to a list of potential judges that will be shared with Educators in the Northeast District.

Return form and \$5.00 Registration Fee to the Ottawa County Extension Office by May 7th.

Name _____

County _____

Phone Number _____

Please check one:

I will attend the morning training (9 a.m. to 12 noon) _____

I will attend the afternoon training (1 p.m. to 4 p.m.) _____

You may attend two workshops during the training. Please rank, in order of importance, your choices – 1st, 2nd and 3rd:

_____ Food preparation

_____ Household Articles

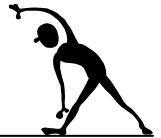
_____ Food preservation

_____ 4-H Projects

_____ Clothing

**WELLNESS TIPS**

brought to you by the OSU Sereteen Wellness Center,

"Dedicated to making OSU the Healthiest Campus in America!"

Florets anyone? Broccoli is rich in nutrients, dietary fiber, vitamins A and C and low in calories—a nutritional powerhouse that's been around for 2,000 years. Choose bunches that are dark green, purplish or bluish green. Good color indicates high-nutrient value, containing more beta-carotene and vitamin C. Choose bunches with stalks that are very firm. Add to your next salad or favorite dish.

Eating before exercise Your body clearly needs food, but too much just before exercise can impair your performance and make you feel sluggish. Try to strike a reasonable balance. Eat your larger meals 3-4 hours before exercise. Eat small meals if you eat during the last hour or two before starting to exercise.

How to keep blisters away If you want to be kind to your feet, fitness experts recommend you choose athletic socks made of synthetic materials, such as nylon and acrylic. Avoid 100 percent cotton socks because they can become soggy after absorbing sweat, increasing your risk for developing blisters.

Keep it spicy Seasonings can add loads of flavor to reduced-fat recipes. Try basil to spruce up poultry, cilantro or salsa with fish, and dill in low-fat cottage cheese. Use cracked black or red pepper for more exciting pasta, and add turmeric to rice dishes. According to our registered dietitian, a little spice goes a long way toward making fat-modified dishes taste great.

Healthy incentives to exercise Help stick with exercise by rewarding yourself at special milestones. If you've made a personal best or continued exercising when you might have given up before, consider treating yourself to a reward. Try non-food rewards such as a massage, pedicure, concert, CD or some new workout clothes!

A proper warm-up A warm-up should be part of every exercise program, as it prepares your body for more intense activity. A good warm-up is to perform five to 10 minutes of a lower-intensity version of whatever exercise you are about to do. For example, if you are going to do fast walking, then the warm-up should entail a slower-paced walk to acclimate your muscles.

Correct breathing while lifting Correct breathing during exercise helps keep blood pressure down and avoid unnecessary stress on the arteries. The National Institute on Aging recommends exhaling while you lift and inhaling as the weights return to their starting position. You should never hold your breath while lifting weights.

Proper stair-stepper form Our fitness experts say leaning on the sidebars of a stair stepper means that you burn fewer calories than the readout states. To get an accurate reading, set the intensity so you are able to stand upright, with your arms to your sides. If necessary, lightly rest your hands on the bars for balance, but make your legs do the work.

Build your core with stability balls The use of stability balls can provide an inexpensive, lightweight and fun means of improving core muscles and balance. Stability balls range from small to extra, extra large. Choose a ball size that allows you to sit on it with an upright posture and keep your hips and knees at 90 degrees based on your height and leg length. Consult an exercise specialist for proper training guidelines.

Link between smell and food choices If you hold your nose while eating chocolate, you might have trouble identifying the chocolate flavor. This is because taste and smell are closely linked. Smell can account for up to 90 percent of your ability to detect the flavor of some foods. Those with a decline in the ability to smell due to allergies, medications or aging often eat foods containing higher amounts of salt or sugar. Consider using more spices like basil, cumin or chili powder to increase flavor and offset a decreased sense of smell.

Help to stop binge eating A recent study shows binge eating is much more common than previously thought. Simple breathing, relaxation and acknowledging feelings can be helpful for reducing the length of a binge episode. Breaking the cycle of binge eating takes time and patience; and for some people, getting help from a registered dietitian or other health professional with experience in eating disorders is recommended.

Think small portions for pasta Did you know that one serving of pasta is 1/2 cup cooked or a portion about the size of half a baseball? Depending on gender, age and level of physical activity, most Americans need between six and 11 servings of grains each day. Heaping plates of pasta may end up providing more calorie-dense carbohydrates than you need. For a well-balanced meal, try limiting portions of pasta to 1/2-3/4 cup; consider whole wheat, if available; and include plenty of vegetables and lean meat, fish, chicken or tofu.

Improve your golf game Can you picture sinking a tricky putt when you have the caffeine jitters? Improve your golf game by limiting alcohol and caffeine. These substances can negatively affect your play. Alcohol reduces coordination and caffeine can over stimulate you when you need to be calm. Drink plenty of water instead to stay well hydrated and delay premature fatigue.

Spruce up your oatmeal Try adding tasty and nutritious toppings to give that bowl of oatmeal a bit more flavor. Try sliced strawberries and plain nonfat yogurt sprinkled with cinnamon; dried apricots and honey; apple butter and raisins; mix dried fruit; or sliced bananas, raisins and chopped walnuts. One cup of cooked oatmeal, before toppings, contains 4.0 grams of fiber and is a good source of many nutrients.