

July 15, 2020



COVID-19 and Food Preservation

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UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County

Does the COVID-19 stay at home order mean only going out to shop for essential needs and leave you a little afraid about how often you should go out? Do you say to yourself “I wouldn’t have to go out as often if I knew how to extend the shelf life of my food and save money by buying in bulk?” Well now is the perfect time to start thinking about how to properly handle, store, and preserve those foods so you can enjoy them later.

Some examples of food preservation are drying, pickling/fermenting, canning, and then we also have refrigeration and freezing. My first batch of dehydrating herbs was so successful that I’m drying almost everything I get from the grocery store so I can use it later. Yes, that’s correct, I’m drying everything from fruits, herbs, all my vegetables, potatoes, onions, garlic, ginger, carrots, and even tomatoes, to name just a few. The aroma of some of the dried foods is just so strong, you almost salivate. There is no running to the store when I’m out of something, I just drop the dehydrated food item into whatever I’m cooking and it rehydrates itself to its original form.

My grandkids love to help me make fruit leathers from the many jams I have canned, and my daughter-in-law loves to make sauerkraut whenever she desires now that she knows how simple it is. So, no matter what method of preserving you’re interested in trying, the UC Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County are here to help ease you into your new endeavor. We are volunteer members of your community with the desire to help you overcome any fears you may have about food safety and preservation. Maybe you have seen us at the fair handing out the wonderful tasters, or speaking/teaching about scientific-based recipes so you can make informed safe home food preservation decisions. Here’s a favorite recipe of mine for you to try.

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Making and Dehydrating Fruit Leathers

Fruit leathers can be made using fresh berries, canned berries, or frozen berries. Berries can be pureed by themselves, or in combination with other fruits, to make fruit leathers. Since fruit seeds become hard after they dry, it is best to remove the seeds from the puree, using a mesh strainer or food mill, prior to dehydrating.

To make fruit leather:

Puree berries. Remove seeds by pushing pureed berries through a fine mesh sieve, collecting the berry pulp in a bowl, and discarding the seeds. This step is optional, and it is difficult to completely remove all the seeds from the pulp. 3. Sweeten to taste. 4. Pour on a specially-designed liner for leather drying using a dehydrator.

The fruit leather is finished when it is leathery with no moisture pockets. When fruit leather is done, remove from drying tray and roll or cut into bite size pieces. Store dehydrated berries and fruit leathers in moisture-proof containers. Containers that are appropriate for freezing work well for storing dried foods, too. Food-grade plastic freezer bags, glass jars with lids and plastic containers with lids are examples of acceptable storage containers.

We are available to answer home food preservation questions or even become a certified master preserver yourself. You can call and leave a message at (530) 621-5506 or email us at edmfp@ucanr.edu or fill out our "Ask a Master Food Preserver" survey and someone will contact you to answer your questions. For more information about our program and events, visit our website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmfp>. Sign up to receive our ENewsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpcsenews/>. Or reach out to us on [Facebook](#), too (UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County)!