GARDEN TO SHELF, CANNING MADE EASY!

The article for this week is contributed by my colleague, Donielle Axline, 4H Youth Development Educator, University of Maryland Extension Frederick County.

Growing a garden is a great choice for healthy produce for your family. Now is the time to start planting your garden full of vegetables you can enjoy all summer. Planting a garden has many rewards including spending time outdoors, teaching loved ones how to care for a living thing, and reaping the benefits of your labors with the delicious produce your family will harvest. Many seasonally grown vegetables in Maryland can be enjoyed year round, if they are harvested and stored properly.

Seasonal produce can be enjoyed fresh, frozen, dried, and canned. Food preservation through canning is a great option for families with space in their home to store their locally grown produce. For a small start-up cost, canning fruits and vegetables can be a beneficial option for your family and friends.

I had the great opportunity to learn from my mother, and family members how to can at a young age, and it is a process I enjoy sharing with my young son. He helps me prepare the fruits and vegetables for packing (placing in the jar) and always helps with taste testing. I love having him help us outside in our garden, but even more so, I thoroughly enjoy our time together canning.

Many believe canning is a hard process and is not safe. Through advancements in food preservation technology, water bath and pressure canning techniques are safe to utilize in your home. Just like learning to drive a car, there are steps to follow when developing the skills and techniques for canning. Certain foods are required to be processed in a boiling water bath and other under pressure in a pressure canner. Through these processes the contents in the jars are heated to a temperature that destroys microorganisms and inactivates enzymes. As the jars cool, the lid forms a vacuum seal protecting your food from outside pathogens.

Canning supplies can easily be found at your local hardware, grocery and superstores like Wal-Mart, Target or K-Mart. Supplies, with the exception of lids, are reusable from year to year.
The University of Maryland Extension Frederick County Office will be offering a canning class on June 18, 2014, from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. Participants will learn techniques for utilizing a boiling water bath and pressure canning methods in their homes through hands on instruction in the demonstration kitchen. Each participant will receive the *So Easy to Preserve* Canning guide with Recipes produced by Cooperative Extension, The University of Georgia in addition to two canned items. Registration is $65 for adults. Classes for youth are also available upon request. For registration information and payment options please contact the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County Office at 301-600-1595 or via email at lstrong@umd.edu.

**So Easy To Preserve 5th Edition:**  
**Sweet Cucumber Pickles (about 4 or 5 pint jars)**

3 pounds cucumbers, medium sized  
1 quart vinegar (5%)  
2 teaspoons salt  
5 cups sugar

Wash cucumbers. Slice 1/16 – inch off blossom ends and discard. Pour boiling water over the cucumbers and let stand 5 to 10 minutes. Drain off the hot water and pour cold water over the cucumbers. Use running water or change water until the cucumbers are cooled. Mix vinegar, salt and sugar. Bring to a boil. Place cucumbers in the boiling liquid. Return a boil. Pack hot pickles into hot canning jars leaving 1/2 inch head space. Fill jars to 1/2 inch from top with boiling liquid. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process 10 minutes in a boiling water bath.

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Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, FAND, is a licensed Registered Dietitian, Fellow of the Academy of Nutrition Dietetics, and Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences.

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