EXTENSION OFFERS CLASSES IN HOME FOOD PRESERVATION

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

The fall months are an excellent time to practice safe food preservation techniques. Although the growing season is slowly coming to an end for 2012, there are still many nutritious items available in your local communities to be preserved for your family. As we enter the fall months you can still preserve fresh produce like broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes, squash, and apples. The real question is not what produce do I preserve but, What is the best method to preserve food for the upcoming year for my family?

Canning is one method available and is an easy, safe technique to use. After taking a class with some of my colleagues as a refresher for canning at home, I was quickly on my way to preserving my locally grown food for the upcoming year. Although canning is not a hard practice to learn, there are specific steps for one to follow in mastering the science of safe food preservation.

When using proper canning practices one should always:

- carefully select and wash fresh food,
- peel some fresh foods,
- utilize hot packing for many foods,
- add acids (lemon juice or vinegar) to some foods,
- use acceptable jars and self-sealing lids,
- process jars in a boiling-water bath or pressure canner for the correct period of time.

“Collectively, these practices remove oxygen; destroy enzymes; prevent the growth of undesirable bacteria, yeasts, and molds; and help form a high vacuum in jars. Good vacuums
form tight seals which keep liquid in and air and microorganisms out” according to the National Center for Home Food Preservation (http://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html).

If learning safe food preservation techniques is an interest of yours, you can attend classes locally in Frederick through the University of Maryland Extension office on Montevue Lane. Two classes will be offered this fall. Pre-registration is required. Classes are $65 each. Classes will be held on Friday, October 26th and Saturday, October 27th from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. For more information or registration contact the Extension Office at 301-600-1589.

When canning always use a certified tested recipe. This will ensure consistency and most important a safe product for your family or friends. A great fall recipe is homemade applesauce, from the So Easy to Preserve 5th Edition cookbook published by Cooperative Extension The University of Georgia.

HOMEMADE APPLESAUCE:

Select apples that are sweet, juicy and crisp. For a tart flavor, add 1 to 2 pounds of tart apples to each 3 pounds of sweeter fruit.

Hot Pack – Wash, peel, and core apples. Place drained slices in an 8 to 10 quart pot. Add 1/2 cup water. Stir occasionally to prevent burning, heat quickly and cook until tender (5 to 20 minutes). Press through a sieve or a food mill, if desired. If you prefer chunkier style sauce, omit the pressing step. If desired, add 1/8 cup sugar per quart of sauce. Taste and add more, if desired. Reheat sauce to a boil. Pack into hot jars, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process in a Boiling Water Bath.

Pints - 15 minutes
Quarts - 20 minutes.

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