



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, these, gardeners are faced with an overabundance of produce. 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 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.

Microwave blanching may not be effective. 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.

Those who prefer to pressure or water bath excess produce, are encouraged to use up-to-date recipes and to test pressure canner dial gauges each year. Gauges may be tested free of charge at the OSU Extension Center. Call 580.362.2200 for an appointment.

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Sodium- Reduce to 1,500 mg

Current dietary guidelines recommend that adults in general should consume no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. However, if you are in the following population groups, you should consume no more than 1,500 mg per day:

- You are 40 years of age or older.
- You are African American.
- You have high blood pressure.

A new CDC report shows that two out of three (69%) adults in the United States fall into these groups who are at especially high risk for health problems for consuming too much sodium. Eating less sodium can help prevent, lower, or even control blood pressure.

Most people eat about 4,000 mg of sodium per day. About 77% comes from processed and restaurant food.

If everyone could cut out most of their high-sodium restaurant meals and high-sodium processed foods, it would be easy to get to 1,500 mg of sodium or even less per day. $4,000 - 77\% = 920$ mg

Reading food labels in the grocery store and choosing mostly fresh foods and foods with 5% or less of the daily value for sodium is key. See our chart on the right for a list of restaurant meals that can help you achieve your goal of 1,500 mg of sodium or less.

Restaurant best bets:

Salad with vinegar
Plain burger
Baked fish, steamed veggies
Baked potato with sour cream
Plain rice, steamed veggies
Pasta tossed with garlic fresh tomatoes

High sodium fare:

Chicken dishes
Sauce
Cheese
Bread
Dressing
Flavored pasta or rice
Pizza
Seasonings
Blackened items
Fried items
Ketchup
Mustard
Pickles
Asian foods

8 Signs of a Predatory Payday Loan



1. *Triple-digit Interest Rate:* Payday loans carry very low risk of loss, but lenders typically charge fees equal to 400% APR and higher.
2. *Short minimum loan term:* 75% of payday customers are unable to repay their loan within two weeks and are forced to get a loan “rollover” at additional cost. In contrast, small consumer loans have longer terms.
3. *Single balloon payment:* Unlike most consumer debt, payday loans do not allow for partial, installment payments to be made during the loan term. A borrower must pay the entire loan back at the end of two weeks.
4. *Loan flipping (extensions, rollovers or back-to-back transactions):* Payday lenders earn most of their profits by making multiple loans to cash-strapped borrowers. 90% of the payday industry’s revenue growth comes from making more and larger loans to the same customers.
5. *Simultaneous borrowing from multiple lenders:* Trapped on the “debt treadmill”, many consumers get a loan from one payday lender to repay another. The result: no additional cash, just more renewal fees.
6. *No consideration of borrower’s ability to repay:* Payday lenders encourage consumers to borrow the maximum allowed, regardless of their credit history. If the borrower can’t repay, the lender collects multiple renewal fees.
7. *Deferred check mechanism:* Consumers who cannot make well on a deferred (post-dated) check covering a payday loan may be assessed multiple late fees and non-sufficient Funds check charges or fear criminal prosecution for writing “bad check”.
8. *Mandatory arbitration clause:* By eliminating a borrower’s right to sue for abusive lending practices, these clauses work to the benefit of payday lenders over consumers.

Swine Flu and You

Human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have been identified in the United States and also internationally. Investigations are ongoing to determine the source of the infection and whether additional people have been infected with swine influenza viruses.¹

No one knows whether this particular swine flu will become pandemic – that is, whether it will affect large numbers of people in wide geographic regions. Swine flu is one of the many type A influenza viruses. It's unusual for humans to catch swine flu, but occasional cases occur, usually in people who have contact with infected pigs. Like other flu viruses, the swine flu virus changes its DNA as it spreads, giving rise to a number of subtypes.²

The CDC answers these Frequently Asked Questions:

How does swine flu spread?

CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. Spread of this virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent hand washing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

Can I get swine flu from eating or handling pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.¹ Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160° F kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.³

If you have not prepared <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/index.html> has checklists to assist individuals, families, schools, businesses, child-care facilities, and community groups plan and prepare for pandemic influenza. The site www.ready.gov also has information for families on building a disaster kit, making a communication plan and being informed about disasters in your local area.

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>
2. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/swine-flu/AN02000>
3. http://www.eden.lsu.edu/Issues_View.aspx?IssueID=D1B8635B-6B6A-4326-8BBF-FF6FCEC0EA5C



What You Can Do to Stay Healthy:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Try to stay in good general health:
 - o Get plenty of sleep
 - o Be physically active
 - o Manage your stress
 - o Drink plenty of fluids
 - o Eat nutritious foods
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Try not to touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus.
- When greeting others, do not shake hands or kiss.

If you get sick, you may want to contact your health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed. The antiviral drugs oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza) reduce the severity of symptoms. CDC recommends those with flu stay home from work, school, or errands and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it then wash your hands. Flu is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

STRETCHING YOUR FOOD BUDGETwith Pasta

Busy families continue to search for foods that are healthy, satisfying and economical – and they do not need to look further than the pasta aisle. Nearly fat free and salt free, pasta is a healthy meal option for consumers. Also, low on the Glycemic Index (GI) pasta naturally satisfies hunger longer without spiking blood sugar levels.

In response to the Food Pyramid launched in 2005, consumers are looking for ways to add more whole grains and other nutrients to their diets. The U.S. D.A.'s Food Guide Pyramid recommends we eat six to 11 servings of complex carbohydrates daily with at least 3 of those being whole grain. Including pasta in your diet three times a week or more is an easy way to help meet that goal. With the introduction of nutritionally enhanced pasta varieties such as whole wheat, whole grain, pasta with omega-3 and high fiber pasta, there are more options for consumers to enjoy healthy and economical meals the whole family will love.

The Food Pyramid lists ½ cup cooked pasta as 1 serving size. A typical serving of cooked spaghetti will probably provide two or three of your recommended servings of complex carbohydrates.

How do you cook pasta perfectly every time?

1. Boil 4 - 6 quarts of water for one pound of dry pasta.
2. Add the pasta while stirring and return the water to a boil.
3. Stir the pasta occasionally during cooking.
4. Follow the package directions for cooking times. If the pasta is to be used as part of a dish that requires further cooking, undercook the pasta by 1/3 of the cooking time specified on the package.
5. Taste the pasta to determine if it is done. Perfectly cooked pasta should be “al dente,” or firm to the bite, yet cooked thorough.
6. Drain pasta immediately and follow the rest of the recipe.

To keep pasta from sticking, use plenty of water (4 – 6 quarts for each pound of pasta) and don't overcook it.

The only time you should rinse pasta after draining is when you are going to use it in a cold dish, or when you are not going to add sauce and serve it immediately. In those cases, rinse the pasta under cold water to stop the cooking process, and drain well.

How many cups of pasta a pound will make?

- 16 oz. uncooked small to medium pasta shapes = 8 cups cooked. Examples: Elbow macaroni, Medium shells, Rotini, Twists, Spirals, Wagon Wheels, Bow Ties, Mostaccioli, Penne, Ziti, Radiatore, Rigatoni.
 - 16 oz. uncooked long shapes = 3-inch diameter bunch = 8 cups cooked. Example: Spaghetti, Angel hair, Linguine, Vermicelli, Fettuccine.
 - 16 oz. uncooked egg noodles = 5 cups cooked.
- When pairing pasta with a sauce, remember that:
- Thin, delicate pastas, like angel hair or thin spaghetti, are better served with light, thin sauces.
 - Thicker pasta shapes, like fettuccine, work well with heavier sauces.
 - Pasta shapes with holes or ridges, like mostaccioli or radiator, are perfect for chunkier sauces.

Reheating Pasta

To reheat cooked pasta, portion out the amount you need and place in boiling water. For easy draining, you can place the pasta in a stainless steel colander or strainer and then submerge in boiling water. Re-heat a four-ounce serving 40 to 60 seconds. Drain the pasta well, toss with sauce and serve.

Pasta can also be reheated in the microwave oven. Reheat single servings on high for 45 seconds at a time, checking between intervals for doneness.

Storing Pasta

Store uncooked, dry pasta in your cupboard for up to one year. Keep in a cool, dry place. Follow the “first-in, first-out” rule: Use up packages you've had the longest before opening new packages.

Refrigerate cooked pasta in an airtight container for 3 to 5 days. You may add a little oil (1-2 tsp. for each pound of cooked pasta) to help keep it from sticking. Because cooked pasta will continue to absorb flavors and oils from sauces, store cooked pasta separately from sauce.

Freezing Pasta

The best pasta shapes for freezing are those that are used in baked recipes, such as: lasagna, jumbo shells, ziti and manicotti. You'll have better results if you prepare the recipe and freeze it before baking. To bake, thaw the dish to room temperature and bake as the recipe directs.

Credits: <http://www.ilovepasta.org/index.html>
The National Pasta Association, formed in 1904.

The 3/50 Project

Saving the Brick & Mortars Our Nation is Built On

3. Think about which 3 independently owned stores you'd miss most if they were gone. Stop in and say hello. Pick up a little something that will make someone smile. Your contribution is what keeps those businesses around.
50. If just half the employed US population spent \$50 each month in independently owned stores, their purchases would generate \$42,629,700,000 in revenue.* Imagine the positive impact if ¾ of employed Americans did that.
68. For every \$100 spent in independently owned stores, \$68 of it returns to the community through taxes, payroll, and other expenditures.
If you spend that in a national chain, only \$43 stays here. Spend it online and *nothing comes home*.
1. The number of people it takes to start the trend...you.

Pick 3. Spend 50. Save your local economy.

For more information, visit: the350project.net

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*Employment statistics courtesy US Dept of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2/26/2009.

Raising an active family has long term benefits

Young children are like sponges. They are constantly absorbing the world around them. This is one reason why it is so important for parents to practice a healthy and active lifestyle.

“Setting a good example for your children when they are young by leading an active lifestyle, you can set them on a good course for life,” said Debbie Richardson, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension parenting assistant specialist. “Not only is physical activity great for the body, it also provides many opportunities for the family to spend time together.”

More daylight in the evening hours allows parents additional time to fit in beneficial outdoor activities with their children. Moving more boosts energy, promotes sound sleep and builds a lifestyle for parents and their children to stay healthy. Children need physical activity most days and it is important to their overall development.

It is not hard to be active. Simple activities such as playing in the backyard or taking a walk through the neighborhood can get a family moving and enjoying their time together.

Richardson suggests setting time aside each day to play with your children.

“Any amount of time you spend together is beneficial to you and your children. When thinking of activities to do together, make sure to pick out something that appeals to most everyone,” she said. “Change your activities daily so everyone can do something they like.”

Some of the best activities are those that do not cost any money. Mark off a hopscotch court on the driveway or sidewalk with chalk. Make a kite out of materials you have around the house. Go to the local park to fly it. If necessary, figure out how to make it fly better.

Most dollar-type stores have items such as flying discs, jump ropes and balls of various sizes. Keep a stash of these inexpensive items on hand.

If the weather is not cooperating, turn up the music inside the house and dance to burn off energy.

“When the weather is warm, plan a ‘wash day.’ A bucket of soapy water and a sponge are the perfect tools to clean wagons, bicycles and outdoor toys,” Richardson said. “If you have a dog, let it join in on the fun and get a bath in the process.”

For those who have space, gardening can be a wonderful family activity and learning opportunity for children. Research shows that children who are encouraged to help with a garden are more open to try new vegetables when they have helped grow them.

“If you don’t have a garden, check to see if your area has a farmers market. Visit the various booths and talk about the selections of fruits and vegetables,” she said. “Let your child pick out a new fruit or vegetable to try, along with some old favorites.”

Keep in mind that spending time together as a family does not have to cost much or any money at all. Activities such as these are geared to keep the whole family active and healthy.

“You might even want to think of some of the outdoor games you played as a child. The main idea is to make your family closer and more active,” Richardson said. “These are the memories and lifestyles your children will carry on into adulthood and share with their own families.”

How to Prevent Falls

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics show that falls are the leading cause of death from unintentional injuries in the home. The age group most affected by this is senior adults age 65 or older. According to the statistics, older adults are hospitalized for fall-related injuries five times more often than they are for injuries from other causes. Of those who fall, 20 percent to 30 percent suffer moderate to severe injuries that make it hard for them to get around or live independently and increase their chances of early death; and one in three adults age 65 or older falls each year. In 2000, the annual cost of all fall injuries to senior adults topped \$19 billion and, at this rate, is estimated to reach \$54.9 billion by 2020. Many falls are due to overlooked hazards. These hazards are usually easy to fix. Here are a few tips that will help you prevent falls.

Floors

- Do you have a clear path through your rooms? If not, ask someone to help move the furniture so there is.
- Throw rugs can trip you so remove them or use double sided tape to secure them. You may also replace them with ones that have a non-slip backing. Always smooth out wrinkles and folds in your rugs.
- Pick up those things piled on the floor such as magazines, books, boxes, etc.
- Remove all cords or wires that run across your walking path. Even a taped down wire across a path can cause you to trip and fall.

Stairways

- Never store things on or around stairways.
- Have loose or broken steps repaired or replaced.
- Make sure that the stairway is well lit.
- Make sure carpets on the stairs are securely fastened to the stairs and there are no loose pieces. If so, have them removed or replaced.
- Make sure the handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs, and that both rails are secure and tight.
- Consider painting the edge of the step a contrasting color to make it easier to see.

Kitchen

- Move the most used items in your cabinets (both upper and lower cabinets) to the middle shelves (about waist level).
- If you must use a step stool, use one that has a built-in handle to hold onto. Never use a chair or box as a step stool.
- Wipe up spilled liquids immediately.

Bathroom

- Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- Have grab bars installed next to the tub, shower, and toilet.
- Use a bath mat that has a non-slip backing next to the tub or shower. Never use a towel.

Bedroom

- Place a lamp close to your bed where it is easy to reach or have a light switch installed above your bed.
- Place night lights along your path so you can see where you're walking. Some night lights will automatically come on when it gets dark.
- Keep the area around the bed clear of obstructions that might cause a fall.
- Sleep toward the center of the bed and sit up on the side before getting out of bed.

Other things You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Exercising regularly makes you stronger and improves your coordination and balance. Ask your doctor about the best physical exercise for you.
- Some medicines can make you dizzy or sleepy. Have your doctor look at all the medicines you take including the over-the-counter medicines.
- Poor vision increases your chances of falling. Have your vision checked every year.
- Take your time getting up from chairs or beds. Sit up a moment before you get out of bed. Stand and get your balance before you begin to walk.
- Wear sturdy, well-fitted shoes with non-slip soles. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.
- Put in brighter light bulbs. The new fluorescent bulbs are brighter and cost less to use and add lighting to dark areas.
- Open shades and curtains during the day to let in more light.

Following these tips will decrease your chances of falling and injuring yourself. However, in case you do fall, remember to keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone. Put a phone near the floor in case you do fall and can't get up. Hide a key outside or give one to a neighbor so the helping agency will have access. Think about wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up.

*By Rick Bruder, a public information officer for
Tulsa Fire Department*

What are Your Resources?

When the money gets tight, it is important to know what resources you have. Resources can be described as assets (time, money, energy), materials, or capital (other funds) which can be used to accomplish your goal.

What are your financial resources?

- Make a list of all of your assets, or everything that you own.
- Distinguish between financial assets (bank accounts, investments, retirement accounts, etc.) and physical assets such as cars, homes, or personal possessions.
- Which financial assets can be easily converted to cash?

What type of personal resources do you have?

- Education, certifications, and designations – Are there opportunities to better market your talents? Or opportunities to increase your skill and knowledge levels to make yourself more marketable?

- Time – Your schedule and the schedule of others in your family may create opportunities to help each other. Consider trading responsibilities such as child care so work time can be extended.
- Talents and skills – Doing repairs, providing music lessons, or gardening can be used to earn money or trade services with others.

What type of resources does your household have?

- Family, friends, other people in your social network may be tapped to meet needs.
- Be sure to access resources in the workplace, online, and in the community
- Personal possessions that have outlived their usefulness to your family can be sold or exchanged.
- Don't overlook the ability to use communication, cooperation, commitment and creativity to find solutions to life's problems.

2009 Pecan Food Show

The Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association is holding a Food Show in conjunction with their 79th Annual Convention in Oklahoma City June 1-3, 2009. Entries in the Pecan Show will be accepted from 7:30 - 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 2, 2009 and can be picked up the same day between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m.

If you have a potential "winner" for any of these classes, contact our office for a copy of the complete entry rules or a copy of the convention program. There is an adult and a youth division for each of these classes:

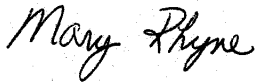
- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Pecan Pies: | Class A: Standard 9" pie
Class B: Other 9" pie |
| Pecan Bread and Rolls: | Class A: Quick Bread (standard loaf)
Class B: Yeast Bread (standard loaf)
Class C: Rolls (6 rolls) |
| Pecan Candy: | Class A: Pecan Fudge (12 pieces)
Class B: Pecan Brittle or Pralines (12 pieces)
Class C: Pecan Divinity (12 pieces)
Class D: Other Pecan Candy (12 pieces) |
| Pecan Cakes: | Class A: Without Frosting
Class B: Frosted (with pecans in cake) |
| Pecan Cookies: | Class A: Pecan Cookies (12 cookies)
Class B: Pecan Brownies (12 brownies) |
| Pecan Meats: | Class A: Salted or Spiced (1/2 cup)
Class B: Candied (1/2 cup) |
| Pecan Specialty Food: | Class A: Desserts
Class B: Non-Desserts |

Child Safety Seat Check

Did you know that 4 out of 5 child safety seats are used incorrectly or have been recalled? Find out if your child is riding safely at the next child safety seat check offered Saturday, June 6th from 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. at Ponca Plaza's parking lot, 2101 N 14th, Ponca City. The first 20 eligible families will receive a free child safety seat. *No citations for non-compliance are given at these checks.* Sponsored by Ponca City Fire and Life Safety Council, Oklahoma Safe Kids Coalition and Children's Hospital at OU Medical Center these services are offered FREE

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