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.

Home food preservation is a great way to extend the fresh taste of summer. 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. 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.

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.

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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 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.

What’s the first thought that comes to your mind, when you think of a strawberry?

It is probably of a mouth-watering dessert of strawberries mixed with fresh cream? There’s nothing that says "Hello Summer" quite like eating a juicy vine-ripened strawberry that has been ripened to perfection in the early summer sunshine. Strawberries serve more than just fulfilling the sweet tooth. They are packed with hordes of health benefits, making a nutritious fruit for mind and body.

Strawberry Nutrition:

Strawberries are not only good to eat, they are also "good for us." They are an especially tasty source of vitamin C (ascorbic acid). In fact, one cup of fresh strawberries provides about 88 milligrams of ascorbic acid, which more than meets the Recommended Daily Dietary allowance of 45 milligrams for the average adult. Vitamin C is well retained when the strawberries are handled carefully. Capping, injuring, cutting, or juicing, however, will reduce the vitamin content.

Strawberries are low in calories: one cup of unsweetened strawberries has only 55 calories. So if you are on a reducing diet, use strawberries to add flavor, food value, and pleasure to meals. You can even eat some as a between-meals snack.

One 140 g serving of eight (8) medium-sized strawberries has:

- 140% of the Daily Value for vitamin C
- 12% of the Daily Value for dietary fiber
- Only 7 grams of sugar (lowest among the top-selling fruits)
- A source of folate and potassium
- Only 45 calories

http://whatscookingamerica.net/StrawberryHints.htm
Fresh Salad with Strawberries

**Ingredients:**
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 3 T. sugar
- 3 romaine hearts, torn (about 18 oz.)
- 6 oz. fresh baby spinach
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 qt. fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1 green onion, chopped
- Dash of pepper
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 T. parsley, chopped
- 2 T. sugar
- 2 T. vinegar
- Dash of hot pepper sauce

**Directions:**
Over medium heat, cook almonds and sugar. Stir until the almonds are coated, cool before serving. Mix romaine, spinach, celery, strawberries and green onions together in very large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix together pepper, olive oil, parsley, sugar, vinegar and hot pepper sauce. Add almonds and dressing over mixed greens. Toss and serve. Makes 24—1 cup servings.

Nutrition Information: 60 calories; 4 g fat; 15 mg sodium; 0 g cholesterol; 6 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; and 1 g protein.

Source: Chickasaw Nation Nutrition Services

Berry Cheesecake Trifle

2 (8-ounce) packages low fat cream cheese
1 cup powdered sugar
1 cup low fat sour cream
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1 (12-ounce) container frozen low-fat whipped topping, thawed
1 angel food cake, torn into bite-sized pieces
1 1/2 quarts fresh strawberries, sliced
1 1/2 quarts fresh blueberries
3 tablespoons granulated sugar

1. In large bowl, cream together cream cheese and powdered sugar; add sour cream, vanilla, and almond extract. Set aside.
2. Fold whipped topping into cream cheese mixture. Add cake pieces and fold lightly, set aside.
3. Combine strawberries and sugar.
4. Layer in large glass bowl starting with strawberries, then cake pieces, then blueberries. Continue layering until finished, 3 or 4 layers is good (depends on your bowl). Finish with berries on top and garnish with additional whipped topping if you want. Cover and chill well. Garnish with additional strawberries and blueberries just before serving, if desired. Makes 24 servings.

**Note:** If you like, fat-free may be used or you may use half of each. This trifle may be made with all strawberries or all blueberries, and it is good with fresh peaches. A peaches and blueberry mixture is good too.

Source: http://www.cooksrecipes.com
Little Steps for Saving Money

1. **Master the 30 day rule.** Whenever you're considering making an unnecessary purchase, wait thirty days, then ask yourself if you still want that item.
2. **Invite friends over instead of going out.** Almost every activity at home is less expensive than going out.
3. **Call your credit card company and ask for a rate reduction.** Flip your card over and call the number of the back of the card. Tell them that you want an interest rate reduction. If the first person won't do it, ask to talk to a supervisor.
4. **Wear it out.** What's the last item you actually wore out? Try using them at least 20% longer and give away usable items to charity.
5. **Drink more water.** Drink a big glass of water before each meal - you'll feel better and eat less. Replace other drinks with water to save money.
6. **Be diligent about turning off lights before you leave.** The key is to use less energy.
7. **Do a “maintenance run” on your appliances.** Use your vacuum to clear away dust in vents, under and around appliances.
8. **Try generic brands of items you buy regularly.** You'll likely discover the store brand is just as good as the name brand - the only difference is marketing.
9. **Get rid of unread magazine subscriptions.**
10. **Air up your tires.** For every two PSI that all of your tires are below the recommended level, you lose 1% on your gas mileage.

Source: [http://thesimpledollar.com](http://thesimpledollar.com)

Free Cooking Shows

- Tuesday, April 7, 7:00 p.m., Chickasaw Nation Nutrition Center, *The Goodness of Gardening.*
- Tuesday, April 21, 7:00 p.m. or Friday, April 24, 10:00 a.m. & 12:00 p.m., Chickasaw Nation Nutrition Center, *Feeding the Future: New Beginnings.*

Pontotoc County OHCE Quilt Show,

*Traditions and Texture*

This event, featuring a quilt show, free demonstrations, door prizes and merchants' mall, will be held April 24th and April 25th at the Pontotoc County Agri-Plex, 1700 North Broadway, in Ada.

Show times are 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday.

There is a $2.00 admission fee.
REMINDER*** Discoveryland Tour, June 11, 2009***
Registration deadline: April 20, 2009

Play: Seven Brides for Seven Brothers.

Cost: $63.00—includes bus far, play, dinner and tips. We need 40 participants for trip to make.

Dinner: Rib Eye Steak Sandwich, Potato Salad, Baked Beans, Corn on the Cobb, Tomatoes, Onions and Peppers; iced tea; Mud Pie or Berries N Cream.

Details: Depart from Purcell, United Parking Lot, 3:00 p.m.
Depart from Goldsby Baptist Church, 3:15 p.m.
Return approximately 12:00 a.m.
Break stop at McDonald’s on turnpike.

Mail payment made payable to McClain County OHCE to Peggy Howard; 1613 Judy Street; Purcell, OK 73080.

OHCE Week – May 3-9

All HCE groups are encouraged to participate in OHCE Week – suggestions are displays in local businesses, news articles, special community service projects or club events. Take lots of photos and be sure and report activities to your local newspapers.

Spring Council – Bring a Friend
Tuesday, May 5, 10:00 a.m.
Pioneer Telephone Community Room, Blanchard

We will be celebrating OHCE Week with Spring Council on May 5. This special “Bring a Friend” to council will feature a program given by Wes Lee, McClain County Agriculture Educator, who will speak on Good Bugs – Bad Bugs.

County Council will provide lasagna for the meal. All members should bring a salad, vegetable dish or dessert. Hostess clubs are Town & Country and Washington Busy.

State Cookbooks Available

We still have around 30 State OHCE Cookbooks (green) available to purchase. The cost is $10.00 each.
Standing Rules Addition Vote

The following proposed standing rule was passed out at Winter Council.

#6 New members who join after July 1 will not pay state dues, but will pay county dues of $2.00.
Standing Rules #6-13 will be renumbered 7-14.

Please discuss this proposed change at your next group meeting and call Mickey with your group’s “yes” or “no” vote. Only two clubs have voted.

Water for All

Our county is again participating in the “Water for All” project. This is an international project conducted with Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). Our donations help to improve water supplies in rural communities in South America, Africa, the Indian sub-continent, the Far East and South Pacific by providing water tanks, wells, land pumps and sanitation facilities. Each club is asked to donate $1.00 per member. Checks can be sent to Treasurer, Peggy Howard.

USA Country Store

The Country Women’s Council USA will host a craft room called the “USA Country Store” at the 2010 Associated Country Women of the World Triennial. They are asking for donations of handmade craft items. If you are interested in donating items, the committee asks that a sample or picture of the item be sent to the chairman for approval. Items should be non-breakable and easy to pack. More information can be obtained through the Extension Office.

Date for Your Calendar

The OHCE State Meeting will be July 12-14, 2009, at the Clarion Convention Center in Oklahoma City. Sunday evening event will be at National Cowboy & Western Heritage Center. Registration information will be in next newsletter.

Books Donated to McClain County DHS

McClain County OHCE voted at our last Council meeting to donate money for children’s books for the McClain County Department of Human Services library. The books have been purchased and were delivered to DHS March 30. They are used daily by families visiting the DHS offices.

E-Mail Addresses Needed

We are trying to set an e-mail list of OHCE members so we can send reminders and event notifications. I currently have 24 member e-mail addresses. To be included, send your e-mail address to mickey.simpson@okstate.edu.

District Meeting Report

Congratulations to Jenifer Lanzarin from the Washington HCE group, who was named District Young Member for 2008. Jenifer was honored with a certificate and gift. Anita Ballard from Town and Country was recognized as the McClain County Heart of HCE recipient.

Seventeen McClain County OHCE members ventured to Elk City on March 24 for District Council. Attending were Peggy Christian, Peggy Howard, Anita Ballard, Bert Mathis, Phyllis Linker, Jenifer Lanzarin, Mary Isbill, Carolyn Jordan, Margie Moore, Kathy Langley, Elaine Dahl, Mary Eggleston, Shirley Ferris, Marilyn Rowland, JoAnn Wood, Barbara Waggoner, and Karen Smith.
### McClain County O.S.U. Cooperative Extension Calendar

#### April, 2009

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<th>Sun</th>
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<td>4-H Day at the Capitol</td>
<td>Washington Busy Set up for Reality Check</td>
<td>Washington Reality Check, Mid-America Technology Center</td>
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<td>13 Stealey Fair Board, 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>14 Cole Healthy Snacks Blanchard Library, 3:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>16 OEAFC Meeting, OKC</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18 4-H Fashion Revue &amp; Impressive Dress, 9:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>20 Discoveryland Trip registration due to Peggy Howard</td>
<td>21 Blanchard</td>
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<td>23 HCE Leader Training, CH, 1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>24 Co-Parenting, Courthouse, 9:00 am—12:00 pm</td>
<td>25 County 4-H Horse Show, McClain County Expo Center</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>27 Healthy Snacks, Purcell Library, 3:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>29 DASNR Day at the Capitol Healthy Snacks, Newcastle Library, 3:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>OHCE Week (May 4-9)</td>
<td>Washington Busy</td>
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<td>14 Washington</td>
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<td>16 Home Buyers Education Class</td>
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<td>Stealey Fair Board, CH, 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>21 HCE Leader Training, CH, 1:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>OAE4-HA</td>
<td>Blanchard CARE Meeting, 8:30 a.m.</td>
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May Leader Lesson Set for April 23

_Sun Safety_ will be the HCE Leader Lesson taught by Donna Jung, Canadian County Extension Educator, FCS. The lesson will be on protection from the sun’s rays and will be held in Room 111 at the Courthouse, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

June Leader Lesson Scheduled for May 21

LaDonna Dunlop, Oklahoma County Extension Educator, FCS, will teach the lesson on _Gourmet on the Go_. This program will give you ideas to prepare a quick and healthy meal. The lesson will be in Room 111 at the Courthouse at 1:30 p.m.