Making room for this season’s garden harvest

Now that the spring season is underway, many gardeners are looking forward to getting their fruits and vegetables in the ground and hoping for a productive growing season. For those who had a bountiful harvest last season and canned or froze their crops, it is time to clear off the shelves and clean out the freezer and get ready to preserve this year’s harvest, said Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension food specialist.

“There’s nothing better than opening a jar of green beans or pulling a bag of okra from the freezer in the middle of winter and being able to taste that summer freshness,” Brown said. “If you had a particularly big garden, it’s likely you’ve still got a few jars of goodness on your shelves or in your freezer. Because the quality of home-preserved foods doesn’t last forever, it’s a good idea to clear out those canned foods in the pantry or those foods in the freezer to make space for what you’re planning to grow this season.”

Although freezing will not improve the flavor or texture of any food, it can preserve most of the quality of a fresh product as long as it is frozen properly and stored at 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Most fruits and vegetables will last in the freezer eight to 12 months. Certainly, these foods should be safe to eat after a year, but the eating quality and nutrition may be lower. Putting dates on all your frozen foods can help make sure you use them while they are at their best.

Some gardeners prefer to can some of their fruits and vegetables. Properly canned food stored in a cool, dry place will retain optimum eating quality for at least a year. “Most of us don’t have a root cellar like our ancestors did, so proper storage is a must,” Brown said. “Canned food stored in a warm place near hot pipes, a range, a furnace or indirect sunlight will have a much shorter shelf life. Also, canned items stored in a damp area can cause lids to corrode and may result in leakage, so the food will spoil. Before you get started canning this year’s harvest, go through any remaining foods from last year and check for signs of spoilage.”

A good idea to place a date on canned food each year too.

Check over your home canned foods for signs of spoilage. Check the seals, make sure flats are not swollen and there is no sign of gas bubbles, mold or other unwanted growth inside the jars. Do not taste food from a jar with an unsealed lid or food that shows signs of spoilage. You can more easily detect some types of spoilage in jars stored without screw bands. Growth of spoilage bacteria and yeast produces gas which pressurizes the food, swells lids and breaks jar seals. As each stored jar is selected for use, examine its lid for tightness and vacuum. Lids with concave centers have good seals. Next, while holding the jar upright at eye level, rotate the jar and examine its outside surface for streaks of dried food originating at the top of the jar. Look at the contents for rising air bubbles and unnatural color. While opening the jar, smell for unnatural odors and look for spurting liquid and cotton-like mold growth (white, blue, black or green) on the top food surface and underside of lid.

“No matter which method of preservation you prefer, make sure to use proper preservation and storage methods,” Brown said. “This will help ensure you have garden-ripe fruits and vegetables all year long.” For information on proper canning and freezing of garden produce, visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation at http://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html.
Foods and Meds That Don’t Mix

If you’re one of the millions of Americans who take a statin medication such as atorvastatin (Lipitor and generic) or simvastatin (Zocor and generic) to lower cholesterol, you may have been told to avoid grapefruit juice. That's because the juice can intensify the strength of these common drugs and increase the chance of side effects—notably, muscle pain.

Dozens of other foods, including some that are part of a healthy diet—such as kale and green leafy vegetables—are also risky to mix with certain medications.

This doesn’t mean you have to avoid such foods completely—just be cautious. In most instances, “leaving at least 2 to 4 hours between the interacting food or juice and the medication is usually recommended,” says Dima Qato, Pharm.D., Ph.D., assistant professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, who has studied food and drug interactions. Talk with your doctor about your specific medications and your diet.

Below, we list some common foods that could interact with your medications, and offer suggestions on how to safeguard yourself:

- **√ Bananas, green leafy vegetables, oranges, salt substitutes**
  - **Don’t Mix With:** ACE inhibitors such as captopril (Capoten), enalapril (Vasotec), and lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril), used to lower blood pressure or treat heart failure. And avoid mixing with some diuretics, such as triamterene (Dyrenium), used to reduce fluid retention and treat high blood pressure.
  - **Reason:** These foods are all high in potassium, which helps provide electrical signals to heart-muscle cells and other cells. Consuming them with the medications listed could increase the amount of potassium in your body and may lead to an irregular heartbeat or heart palpitations—which could be deadly.

- **√ Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, kale, spinach**
  - **Don’t Mix With:** Blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin).
  - **Reason:** Foods that contain a lot of vitamin K, such as the greens, can reduce the drugs’ ability to thin the blood. In some people with heart disease, that could trigger a heart attack or a stroke. Once you begin taking warfarin, maintain a consistent diet and don’t suddenly overload on leafy greens.

- **√ Cheese, yogurt, milk, calcium supplements, antacids with calcium**
  - **Don’t Mix With:** Tetracycline.
  - **Reason:** The calcium in these foods and products can interfere with the body’s ability to absorb the antibiotic fully. In general, tetracycline works better if taken 1 hour before or 2 hours after eating.

- **√ Alcohol, avocados, bananas, chocolate, salami**
  - **Don’t Mix With:** Drugs such as metronidazole (Flagyl) and linezolid (Zyvox), used to treat bacterial infections.
  - **Reason:** The foods listed above, along with tap beer, red wine, and sherry, contain tyramine, an amino acid that can cause blood pressure to spike if taken with linezolid. Tyramine is also found in foods that are aged, pickled, fermented, or smoked, such as processed cheeses, anchovies, and dry sausage. Alcohol and metronidazole together could cause nausea, stomach cramping, and vomiting.

- **√ Soybean flour, walnuts**
  - **Don’t Mix With:** Thyroid drugs such as levothyroxine (Levothroid, Levoxyl, Synthroid).
  - **Reason:** These high-fiber foods can prevent your body from absorbing the medications. If you eat a high-fiber diet, try taking your medications later in the evening. One study found that the drugs were better absorbed when taken at bedtime rather than a half-hour before breakfast, which is what is usually recommended in the instructions.

Source: Michigan State University Extension
OHCE NEWS

May Leader Lesson:
Powder Puff Household Repairs

June Leader Lesson:
Family Mental Health & Opioid Addiction
(information is in the Extension Office)

May Activities
May 25—Sew In, Extension Office
Starlight and Wagoner OHCE Executive council is presenting
awards to a Wagoner High School Student
Shahan will be presenting an Award at Coweta High School

June Activities
OHCE Sew In June 29th
OHCE Executive Meeting June 13th at 1:30 PM
(All officers of each Club please attend)
Bring volunteer hours

Don’t forget OHCE Week is May 6-12. The week of or prior
too would be a good time to show the county what we have
been accomplishing with a display or host a bake sale
while handing out OHCE Brochures.

OHCE OPEN HOUSE—May 7th 4:30-6PM
for all members and friends who want to
show what we do for the public!
Wagoner County Extension Office

Editor: Janis Risley
Extension Educator,
Family and Consumer Sciences/ 4-H Youth Development
Wagoner County Educator

Blueberry Cheese Cake

1 C sugar
1/4 C cornstarch
1 C water
3 C blueberries

Cook in microwave in 3 minute increments stirring each time until thick (9-12 minutes total)

Set aside to cool

1/2 package Graham crackers (15)
1/3 C butter

Crush crackers in blender. Melt butter and mix into crackers.

Pour/pat into a 9x13 inch dish and cool in refrigerator.

Cont. 2- 8oz package cream cheese

1 1/2 C powered sugar
1/4 C milk

Blend cream cheese, milk and powdered

Spread Blueberry mixture over cream cheese mixture, cool.

Spread 1—8oz container cool whip over top of

9x13 pan
24 servings

Nutritional Information
Calories 15
Total fat 10g
Cholesterol 45 g

Complements of Okay Kickers

Family & Consumer Sciences helps communities, families, youth and individuals address issues of health, wealth and well-being through research-based Extension education and programs that are proven to work.

Oklahoma Home & Community Education, Inc. is a local and state wide partner with Cooperative Extension which brings the best knowledge from OSU to its members. Join a local OHCE group and enjoy programs that help make Oklahomans be their best. www.OHCE.okstate.edu

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