

Pickling Time
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UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers

Pickles. Sweet, sour, crunchy, chopped, whole, brine, vinegar, fruit, vegetable, meat...whoa, meat? Yes, any fruit, vegetable or meat preserved in vinegar or brine qualifies as a pickle. Learn more about pickling at the next free public education class being offered by the Master Food Preservers in El Dorado County. The class, "Pickles, Relishes and Sauerkraut" will be offered on July 28th and will be repeated on August 2nd.

Pickling cabbage at home using fermentation and a brine solution results in the tastiest sauerkraut around. The simple instructions require that salt and cabbage be combined and packed into a suitable container. Keep the mixture under the brine by weighing down the top, check every few days that the brine level does not fall, and wait 2-3 weeks for the bubbling to stop, indicating that the sauerkraut has fermented properly. The MFP volunteers at the class explain the entire process thoroughly and instruction sheets list all the steps and necessary equipment.

For those who prefer to indulge in pickled products promptly, the class demonstrators will also show how to prepare fruits and vegetables using vinegar as a preserving agent. Always use commercial vinegar preparations with 5% acidity (also known as 50 grain) or higher. The acidity level controls the safety of the food, so never dilute or reduce the vinegar in a recipe. Most pickling recipes call for salt. Although any salt may be used, to keep the finished product looking the best, use canning or pickling salt.

Take advantage of sales on produce at the local stores, or use the abundant yield from the family garden to stock up on pickles. Anyone who has ever shopped for specialty pickles, such as pickled green beans or asparagus knows just how pricey these items can be. Home pickling not only saves money, but can be a source of pride and fulfillment to those who enjoy serving homemade foods canned without unnecessary chemical additions. And, who can resist creating the best pickles in the whole, wide, world?

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our new Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews/>.

Should you need assistance or require special accommodations for any of our educational programs, please contact us at 530-621-5502.

