

Olives
By Ora Emmerich
UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers

Walk into many of today's grocery stores and right in front of the deli counter find a display of several different types of olives. Why do the stores give so much space to olives? Because people love to try many different types of these delicious fruits, and markets realize the potential profits in a salad bar.

For over 5,000 years, people have been harvesting and utilizing olives both for the oil and for the fruit itself. The many different types of olives attest to the fondness people have developed for this ancient food. Kalamata, niçoise, seviliano and lugano olives demonstrate just a few of the varieties available world-wide today.

The Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County offer a free public education class on olives. The class will be held on September 29th at the Marshall Grange, 4940 Marshall Road in Garden Valley, and will be repeated on October 16th at the county Ag building at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. The volunteer MFPs who lead the class have the skills and knowledge to demonstrate how to cure and preserve olives safely at home.

One of the essential ingredients for the curing of olives, granulated lye, works to take the bitter flavor out of the olives. Olives, such as the Mission or Mamzanillo types, must be cured with a lye solution before preserving. Be sure to obtain 100% pure lye, and never use Draino or any other drain product. When mixing the lye solution, ¼ cup of lye is added to one gallon of water. Do not add the water to the lye; this can cause a violent chemical reaction. Wear rubber gloves and eye protection when mixing lye. Learn how to properly handle the lye solution and how to safely test the processing of the olives from the class instructors.

Included in the directions for the processing of olives will be solutions to common problems faced by home olive curers. Those who attend the class will also learn several methods of preserving the cured olives, including canning, drying and freezing. The class instructors answer questions about olives and recommend resources for further information and additional recipes.

Take advantage of the wealth of information available on home curing and preserving of olives available at the Master Food Preserver's free public classes.

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/mfpnews/>.