

Healthy Food
By Ora Emmerich
UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers

Evidence indicating that fruits, vegetables, nuts and other foods which may be grown in the home garden contribute to a healthier lifestyle continues to grow. The CDC sponsors an entire website geared toward getting people to eat more fruits and veggies, which can be found at www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org. Bill Clinton, past-president of the United States, decided to adopt a plant-based diet as a result of being diagnosed with heart disease. A growing number of people find adding more healthy plants to the diet to be in line with a healthy lifestyle.

The key to health lies in choosing nutrient rich food. The home gardener sits in the driver's seat here, able to decide which seeds to use and what amendments to make to the growing arena. Most home gardeners choose to stay as close to organic as possible, limiting the pesticides and herbicides which may come into contact with the food. After all this trouble, the wise gardener plans ahead for preserving and storing any food not eaten immediately.

The University of California Cooperative Extension Services include volunteers trained in gardening to help grow the food, and volunteers trained to be Master Food Preservers, people who stand ready and available to share the most up-to-date knowledge for safe home food preservation. The Master Food Preservers commit to many weeks of classes to earn the MFP distinction. In addition to the initial 50+ hours of training, each volunteer promises to continue to learn by investing 12 hours a year to continuing education on the subject of home food preservation. MFPs also agree to serve the community with a minimum of 35 hours of sharing information. The Master Food Preservers in El Dorado County offer a monthly e-newsletter, free public education classes, and a phone hotline for questions about home food preservation. Publications are available on a number of different preserving issues, at a minimum cost to the public. Volunteers enjoy giving demonstrations or speeches to groups, free of charge, on any home food preservation subject.

Protect the investment of time, money and love devoted to the home garden and enjoy the health benefits of homegrown foods. Learn how to safely preserve garden bounty and enjoy healthy food all year round by taking advantage of the resources offered by the Master Food Preservers.

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 Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>.