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Harvesting Autumn

By GenyCassady

UCCE Master Food Preserver of El Dorado County

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Persimmons, pumpkins, pomegranates and cranberries too! Autumn brings not only shorter days and cooler temperatures but also rich, beautiful fruits from our gardens and orchards. Persimmons are an interesting fruit that many people don't know how to process or incorporate into their cooking. There are a few different types of persimmons, the variety typically used in drying is the Hachiya persimmon. Fuyu persimmons are a fruit with a similar texture to an apple with a subtle, sweet flavor. They are delicious added to salads or even sliced and eaten as a light snack.

Hopefully your garden is overflowing with beautiful orange pumpkins. Or if the deer ate your harvest this year, there are plenty of local pumpkin patches bursting with these glorious fruits. Many varieties make a fine pumpkin puree with only a little extra work. You can refrigerate the puree for immediate use or freeze in freezer jars or bags for longer term storage. There is no currently approved method of canning pumpkin puree, however pumpkin chunks may be pressure canned using a USDA approved method. The upcoming UCCE Master Food Preserver class highlighting autumn fruits will include a demonstration of how to can these precious pumpkin chunks.

Pomegranates have become a popular fruit in recent years with products such as pomegranate juice, yogurt and jelly showing up at grocery stores. You can also frequently find whole pomegranates in the produce section of your market. They may seem like a lot of work but those little seeds of goodness are worth the extra effort. Try putting them on a salad! The juice tastes delicious in smoothies or drink a glass for a healthy treat.

No Thanksgiving table is complete without cranberry sauce. And homemade cranberry sauce, what a treat! It is simple to make and brightens up your table. Cranberries are delicious in a variety of other foods from quick breads to oatmeal. Their high acid content also makes cranberries suitable for water bath canning to enjoy throughout the year.

Join the UCCE Master Food Preservers for our next class entitled "Autumn's Harvest" on Saturday, October 10th from 10am-12pm in the Bethell-Delfino Agriculture Building located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. The class will highlight each of the fruits mentioned above and have demonstrations and recipes available to make delicious creations with each.

UCCE Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530)621-5506 and a Master Food Preserver Volunteer will return your call. The Master Food

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Preservers are also available to speak to organizations and clubs about food safety or food preservation topics. Just call the number above to arrange for a speaker for small or large groups. For more information about the public education classes and activities, go to the UCCE Master Food Preserver website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmp>. Sign up to receive our international E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>. Find us on Facebook, too (UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County).