



Happy canning and preserving to all!

We will resume our free public classes in July 2012. To get information throughout the year, visit our website at [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master Food Preservers](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers).

Until then, we'll share seasonal information to help keep your food safe as short-term leftovers, long-term treasures, or gifts of your time and talent for friends and family.

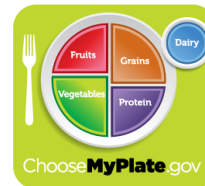
Enjoy!

SuperTracker

We invite you to check out the new tool in town! SuperTracker is now available from the ChooseMyPlate.gov website (choosemyplate.gov/SuperTracker).

Also please note that ChooseMyPlate.gov has been totally redesigned. Most of the content is the same--but some is brand new! If you can't find your favorite page from the previous site--look around--it's most probably just in another location--check the site map.

As we enter the New Year, Americans are looking for ways to meet their New Year's Resolutions. Topping many lists are healthy eating, being active, and managing weight. Introducing SuperTracker!



The USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) has developed a new online diet and physical activity planning, assessment, and analysis tool. SuperTracker is designed to help Americans implement the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the 2008 *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*. With this tool, users can do everything from a quick food look up to in-depth diet and activity tracking and analysis over time and weight management.

Make 2012 your healthiest year yet. Share with us on Twitter (hashtag #SuperTracker) how SuperTracker is helping you make great choices for a great year!

SuperTracker:

My foods. My fitness. My health.

- Get your personalized nutrition and physical activity plan.
- Track your foods and physical activities to see how they stack up.
- Get tips and support to help you make healthier choices and plan ahead.

Note: SuperTracker will overlap with the existing tools (Tracker, Food Planner) for a period of time to allow users to make the switch. Users are encouraged to move to SuperTracker since the previous tools will be phased out.

Inside this issue:

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>SuperTracker</i> | 1 |
| <i>Delicious Soup from the Freezer</i> | 2 |
| <i>Power Outage and Freezer Safety</i> | 3 |
| <i>4-Day Throw Away App</i> | 4 |
| <i>Instant Read Thermometers</i> | 5 |
| <i>Podcast: Egg Products</i> | 5 |
| <i>Veggie of the Month</i> | 6 |
| <i>The Curious Canner</i> | 8 |
| <i>MFP Winter Services</i> | 8 |
| <i>Master Gardener Classes</i> | 8 |

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Delicious Soup from the Freezer

Ora Emmerich, El Dorado County Master Food Preserver

Winter brings blustery winds, rain and snow, chilly days and freezing nights. Winter also brings out the old family cookbook for that just right soup recipe to warm the body and soul. You can't beat favorite family recipes for comfort, but some recipes seem to make enough to feed the neighborhood. Freezing the leftovers in convenient serving sizes can be easy and safe, with these simple guidelines.

Some foods freeze beautifully, while others seem to turn to rubber or mush. The National Center for Home Food Preservation publishes a list of foods that **do not** freeze well. That list includes the following ingredients:

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Cabbage, celery, cress, cucumbers, endive, lettuce, parsley, radishes | Cheese or crumb toppings |
| Irish potatoes, baked or boiled | Cream or custard fillings |
| Cooked macaroni, spaghetti or rice | Milk sauces |
| Egg whites, cooked | Sour cream |

Keep these ingredients in mind when preparing delicious soup recipes and do not add them to stock which will be frozen. Cook these ingredients separately and add them to the base recipe when the frozen soup thaws. If the recipe contains a cream or milk base, be aware that the soup may separate or the dairy portion may curdle when frozen.

Some spices and seasonings change flavor when frozen. Garlic, green peppers and cloves, tend toward bitterness. Celery seasonings increase in intensity, and salt can lose flavor and increase the rancidity of soups containing fat. The recommendation is to season lightly before freezing and to add more seasonings to the thawed, heated soup seems quite reasonable.

Remember to thaw soups properly in the refrigerator. Do not thaw any food on the countertop, as food that has been frozen may actually encourage undesirable organisms to multiply more rapidly than in other foods that have not been frozen. Remember to never keep foods in the "danger zone" (40°F-140°F) for more than two hours. Frozen soups may also be taken directly from the freezer and cooked in a double-boiler or on the stove top.

This recipe, from the University of Nebraska Lincoln, can be doubled and freezes well. Add the pasta just before serving, not before freezing.

Turkey or Chicken Soup

Yield: 2 servings

1 cup chopped, cooked turkey or chicken
 dash of pepper
 1/4 cup chopped onion
 1/4 cup chopped celery
 2 thinly chopped carrots
 1/4 teaspoon thyme
 2 cups low sodium chicken broth
 1 cup cooked pasta (such as bowtie, shells, macaroni, etc.) OR 1 cup cooked rice



1. Clean all working surfaces and your hands.
2. Add all ingredients, except pasta or rice, to pan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cook covered until vegetables are tender crisp, about 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Add cooked pasta or cooked rice and cook a few more minutes until pasta or rice is heated.

*

Power Outage and Freezer Safety

Roger Dillon, El Dorado County Master Food Preserver

So far this winter has been mild, but who knows what this winter will bring; heavy wind or snow storms may hit us in the upcoming months. One thing that goes hand in hand with the bad weather is power failure. Whether it's a traffic collision involving a power pole or a tree knocking down a power line due to snow, when the lights go out, so do the freezer and refrigerator. You can do several things in the event of a power failure to reduce food loss: use backup power, keep the doors closed, try dry ice, and cover the freezer to keep it cool.



Having a backup generator is very handy to keep the electricity running to the freezer and refrigerator uninterrupted. Refer to a licensed electrical contractor for proper installation. For some people, this is not an option.

If the power fails, you can take certain precautions to assure frozen food's safety. If you can turn the freezer back on within two days, keep the door closed to avoid loss of refrigeration. Cover the freezer with a heavy blanket. Use safety pins to hold the blanket away from the vents in case the electricity is restored.



If power will not be restored within 48 hours, use 2½ pounds of dry ice per cubic foot of capacity. Use gloves to place the dry ice on boards or heavy cardboard on top of the food. This can keep the temperature inside the freezer below freezing for two to three days in a half full freezer, three to four days in a loaded freezer.

If all else fails and there is a heat source and canning equipment, preserving the food according to proper canning methods may be the best option.

Keep a freezer thermometer in the freezer to tell if the freezer is cold enough. Another method is to use an empty plastic soda bottle.

Fill the bottle half full of water and put it in the freezer, on its side. Once the bottle has frozen solid, turn the bottle upright and place it in the door. The door is the warmest part of the freezer.



If the power goes out while your family is on vacation or during a storm, the water will melt and gravity will cause the water to settle in the bottom of the bottle. Once the electricity is restored, the water will refreeze in an upright position. This creates a visual cue that the power was interrupted for an extended time.

Food safety should be your number one concern. Discard food that has been above 40°F for more than two hours, or is contaminated by raw meat juices. Discard thawed and refrozen ice cream and other dairy products.

You can refreeze some partially thawed food if it has not been warmed above 40°F. If the thawed food still has ice crystals, it is cold enough to refreeze.

Power outages in the foothills are a way of life. Taking several steps in advance to reduce potential food loss due to an outage keeps food safe:

1. Keep an old blanket and some safety pins stored on top of the freezer or nearby. Pre-cut an old blanket from a thrift store to the size of the freezer for easy use.
2. Pre-cut heavy cardboard or 1/8" plywood to fit the freezer. Do this while the power is on rather than wasting precious refrigeration during an outage to get the fit right. Store this next to the freezer.



*

4-Day Throw Away App

The following story, from the UNL website (<http://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/ianrnews/821/5018>), describes a handy little app developed for use by consumers interested in food safety:

4-DAY THROW AWAY APP UPDATED IN TIME FOR HOLIDAY FEASTING

Worrying if holiday leftovers are safe to eat is one thing you can take off your to-do list this season. The "4-Day Throw Away" leftovers app has come to the rescue.

Families looking for an extra line of defense to protect themselves from bad leftovers now can use the updated version of this app to alert users when it is time to use or throw away a particular food item.

The new version of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension app, available for download in the iTunes App Store at <http://itunes.apple.com/app/leftovers/id427307538?mt=8>, adds a reminder feature which uses a device's push notifications to alert users when it is time to use or throw away a particular food item.

The app is available for iPhone®, iPad® and iPod touch® devices.

The "4-Day Throw Away" leftovers app, launched last spring, is an easy-to-use resource to look up hundreds of individual food items, along with storage recommendations, reheating instructions, special considerations and related foodborne illnesses.

Users of the app can set reminders from within a food description, or by using the reminders tab. Reminders can be set for any number of days and hours in the future, so users can match the guidelines for each food type in the app, or set reminders that work best for their daily lives. A notes section lets users add extra detail to a reminder.

Many consumers don't realize how quickly food leftovers can become unsafe or spoil, said Julie Albrecht, UNL food specialist in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



The app, along with the whole 4-Day Throw Away campaign, is not only informing consumers about food leftovers, but helping them to practice safe leftover usage and food storage in their homes, she said.

The 4-Day Throw Away campaign, which features the #4 as its mascot, is educating consumers about the dangers of foodborne illnesses and the four-day guideline for eating, freezing or throwing away leftovers. It is funded by a United States Department of Agriculture grant and is a partnership between Iowa State University Extension and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension.

More details at: www.4daythrowaway.org.

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Instant-Read Thermometers Make People Better Cooks: Lowers Risk of Killing Family and Friends with Food

29.nov.11, [barfblog](#), Doug Powell

An instant-read thermometer is the best gift for the cook who has everything. Here's what some folks told Elizabeth Weiss of USA Today.

William Keene, senior epidemiologist at Oregon's Public Health Service, gives instant-read thermometers as wedding presents. "They save people's lives."

The thermometer also makes Keene's food taste a lot better. That's because after spending a long day talking to people who've gotten sick from eating undercooked food, he found he had a tendency to overcook everything. Food "would get all dried out." But when he used the thermometer he actually stopped when it was done, rather than overdone. Though don't forget to wash the tip with soapy water after you use it, "to avoid cross-contamination."

Kathy Bernard of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Meat and Poultry Hotline gives them out as bridal shower presents. At the holidays they're especially useful when people pull out recipes they don't often make, like eggnog. "Since it contains raw eggs, if you're going to make it from scratch you start cooking the egg base, stirring it over low heat until the mixture reaches 160," to kill any possible salmonella.

Jack Bishop of America's Test Kitchen, a popular cooking show on PBS, said, "It's something you can be pretty sure most people don't own, or if they do own one, they don't own a very good one."

And they're not just for meat, says Bishop. The old-fashioned method of knocking on the bottom of the loaf pan to see if the bread's done only works if you've spent enough years baking bread that you know what you're listening for. With a thermometer there's no guessing. Plain bread is done at between 200 and 210; a sweet loaf between 190 and 200.

And for cheesecake, a thermometer is the key to avoiding cracks across the top. "The magic temperature is 150," Bishop says.

Old-fashioned meat thermometers rely on metal actually expanding and turning the temperature dial. Digital instant-read thermometers use electronics and are faster and generally more accurate. The instant-read digitals use slightly different technology than a regular digital thermometer, so be sure to look for ones that say they are instant-read.

I started using my thermometer on homemade bread a couple of years ago; big improvement.

*



Podcast: Egg Products



The USDA offers food safety podcasts for consumers. This month, we found the podcast on Egg Products and Food Safety particularly interesting. It explains the egg pasteurization process and reason, how egg products are used in a variety of foods, and how to safely store and use egg products.

Here is the link: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Audio/Egg_Products_&_FS.mp3.

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CDC's Veggie of the Month: Tubers

Ok, "tubers" just sounds yucky. Actually, I should say that it sounds "yucca-y". The yucca root heads the list of root vegetables this month on the CDC website [Fruits and Veggies Matter](#) section.

The CDC says... "Root vegetables are a commonly neglected bunch, but have recently taken some spotlight with increased emergence of international cuisine. Each root has its own unique taste and nutritional value, so be daring and expand your taste buds!..."

Here are some excerpts from the tubers article on the CDC website:



Yucca Root



Yucca (also known as manioc or cassava), is a white, starchy tropical vegetable that is widely grown and consumed in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In many countries, yucca is a dietary staple usually eaten boiled, steamed, and in flour form as thickeners or additional ingredients for noodles, cakes, and pastries.

Yucca root has been growing in Florida since the late 1800s. Cassava is a bushy perennial that can grow as tall as 8 feet. The white interior of yucca is firmer than potatoes and has high starch content. Fresh yucca has thick, dark brown skin that resembles a tree's bark. Fresh yucca is available year round. Look for firm blemish free tubers. Store whole yucca as you would potatoes, in a cool, dark, dry place for up to one week. Keep peeled yucca covered with water and refrigerated or wrapped tightly and frozen for several months.

Yucca can easily be substituted for potatoes in soups and stews and it contains a high amount of vitamin C and carbohydrates. It is also a good source of dietary fiber and contains approximately 120 calories per 1 cup serving.

Jicama



Jicama is a relative of the potato family. It is a popular dietary staple in Latin America and widely grown in Mexico and Central America. There are many names for Jicama including: the Mexican potato, Mexican yam bean, ahipa, saa got, Chinese turnip, lo bok, and the Chinese potato.

Jicama looks similar to a turnip or a large radish, and it can be used as an alternative to the water chestnut. Its skin is thin and can be gray, tan, or brown in color. Additionally, it has a short root and contains white flesh. The skin is typically peeled before eating it raw. Raw jicama tastes similar to a pear or apple. It also does not discolor when exposed to the open air for awhile. Because of this, raw jicama is often used as an accompaniment to raw vegetable platters. When jicama is used in cooking it tends to take on the flavors of the ingredients that it is being combined with. Therefore, jicama is a nice complement to various stir-fry dishes because it blends well with many vegetables and seasonings.

Jicama is a very versatile vegetable that contains a high amount of vitamin C, is low in sodium, and has no fat. One adult serving of jicama, which is equal to approximately 1 cup of cubed jicama or 120 grams, also contains only 45 calories.

Jicama is available year-round. When purchasing jicama, select tubers that are firm and have dry roots. Make sure that the jicama has an unblemished skin and that is not bruised. Once purchased, store jicama for up to two weeks in a plastic bag in your refrigerator.

[Continued, Page 7](#)

CDC Veggie of the Month, *Continued from Page 6*

Water Chestnut



The water chestnut resembles a chestnut in color and shape and is also known as the Chinese water caltrop. This tuber is commonly associated with Chinese cooking, but is finding its way into other ethnic meals.

Hailing from Southeast Asia, water chestnuts are actually roots of an aquatic plant that grows in freshwater ponds, marshes, lakes, and in slow-moving rivers and streams. These roots are commonly grown in Japan, Taiwan, China, Thailand, and sometimes in Australia. Water chestnut harvesting is laborious, making them somewhat expensive to purchase. Processed and canned water chestnuts widely found in most supermarkets. However, fresh water chestnuts, are more difficult to find, but are becoming more available.

If you find fresh water chestnuts, select those that are firm with no signs of wrinkling. These will need to be peeled prior to eating and cooking. Stored fresh tubers need to be wrapped tightly in a plastic bag for up to one week.

Canned, unopened water chestnuts will store indefinitely. Once opened, canned tubers will keep up to one week in a bowl of water. Be sure to change the water daily for the 'freshest' product.

Recipe: Simple Yucca Simmer

Makes 4 servings; Each serving equals ½ cup fruit or vegetables

Source: Melissa's World Variety Produce Chef Ida Rodriguez

Ingredients

- 2 lb Yucca Root (1/2 pound per person)
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic chopped
- 2 Tbsp chives
- ½ tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp ground black pepper

Directions

1. Clean all working surfaces and your hands.
2. Rinse yucca well, peel and halve lengthwise.
3. Remove fibrous core.
4. Combine lemon juice, garlic and fresh herbs in a large pot with enough water to cover yucca.
5. Bring to a boil and add salt.
6. Lower heat and add cold water when necessary so as not to allow water to reach another boil.
7. Pierce with toothpick or fork. When soft (not mushy) remove pieces and set aside.
8. When all pieces are done, drain, sprinkle with pepper and serve hot.



Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 373, Protein 4g, Fat 1g, Calories From Fat 2%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 88g, Fiber 5g, Sodium 269mg.

*

*One morning, as I went to the freezer door, I asked my wife,
"What should I take out for dinner?"*

Without a moment's hesitation, she replied, "Me."

Anonymous

The Curious Canner

Question: Is it true that even eggs with unbroken shells can contain the bacteria Salmonella?

Answer: Yes, that is correct. The number of eggs internally contaminated with Salmonella serotype Enteritidis is less than 1 in 20,000, as reported by the CDC. The eggs that contain the bacteria can make you sick, unless they are properly refrigerated and properly cooked. If contaminated eggs are eaten raw or lightly cooked, having runny egg whites or yolks, the bacterium can cause illness. Although, eggs and poultry are the most common food sources linked to Salmonella serotype Enteritidis, other food sources less frequently identified include raw milk, pork, beef, sprouts and raw almonds. Anyone can get a Salmonella infection; however, the elderly, infants and people with impaired immune systems are at an increased risk for serious illness.



Question: I thawed a casserole in my microwave oven and I forgot about it for several hours. Is it safe to reheat and eat?

Answer: If the casserole was left at room temperature for two hours or more, it should not be eaten. Perishable food should not be held at room temperature two hours or more, as bacteria grow quickly at warm and/or room temperatures. If the daily temperature is above 90°F, food should not be left out more than 1 hour. Bacteria grow most rapidly in the temperature range between 40°F and 140°F, doubling in number in as little as 20 minutes.



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Master Food Preserver Winter Services:

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During the winter, Master Food Preservers provide the following services for our community:

- Food preservation hotline
- Free pressure canner testing
- Speakers for custom training for your organization
- Weekly articles in the Mt. Democrat newspaper

Preserving Times is published by the El Dorado County Master Food Preservers.

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Know someone who would like to receive our newsletters and notifications on classes and events? Sign up at <http://ucanr.org/mfpcnews>.

Master Gardener Classes

Join our fellow educators at a Master Gardener class. For full class descriptions, go to [http://ucanr.org/sites/EDC Master Gardeners](http://ucanr.org/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners).



January

- 7: Pruning and Remedial Pruning of Deciduous Fruit Trees
Location: Veterans Memorial Building
- 14: Rose Pruning
Location: Veterans Memorial Building
- 21: Living with Oaks
Location: Veterans Memorial Building
- 28: Beekeeping
Location: Gov Center Hearing Room, Bld C

February

- 4: Citrus in the Foothills
Location: Veterans Memorial Building

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