

Cranberries, Winter Squash and Turkey
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UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers

So, the guest list includes all the relatives and the big day will be here in about seven weeks. Time to begin planning the best Thanksgiving ever! To help with the food, turn to the Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County and arrange to attend the next free public education class, "Cranberries, Winter Squash and Turkey". The class will be held on Tuesday, October 9 at the Marshall Grange at 4940 Marshall Road in Garden Valley, from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

The volunteer MFP members have some nifty tricks to share that make Thanksgiving dinner a snap. Homemade cranberry sauce tastes out of this world good, and how easy is it to open a jar of the tangy red side dish to serve to guests? Put some up this month and be ready to enjoy it in November. Of course, cranberries add a certain pizzazz to jams and chutneys, so learn how to incorporate this little fruit into these delicious spreads.

Winter squash, including pumpkin, can be found in many homes this time of year. Preserving squash takes a bit more knowledge than other vegetables, as the thickness of the product does not allow a home food preserver to can the mashed or pureed version. Botulism remains a big concern with pureed or mashed squash as heat does not penetrate evenly through the vegetable in this state. However, mashed or pureed squash freezes well, and the MFPs will give all the instructions for a wonderful result.

Every year the turkey questions hotlines hum with the calls from people unsure of how to handle, thaw, cook or save turkey. From store to home to table and beyond, the volunteers will walk the class through the safest ways to take care of the turkey. What size to buy? Fresh or frozen? When to buy it? Answers to these and many other questions will be provided in the class handouts and by the MFP volunteers. Most people do not know that a turkey may be cooked frozen, or how important an accurate thermometer is to insure the safety of the cooked food. Learn all about both in the free public education class.

Enjoy Thanksgiving this year with a little help from advance planning and have a safe, enjoyable holiday!

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/>.