



MASTER FOOD PRESERVERS - WHAT TO DO WITH THAT APPLE HARVEST

By Sue Hale

UCCE Master Food Preserver of El Dorado County

It's apple time! Apples are wonderful; you can do so many things with them, and they stand up to it all so well! Freezing, canning, juicing, dehydrating, pickling - you name it, they can take it. We are lucky to live in an area where there are so many apple orchards if you don't have your own tree.

Apples keep really well, to a point, so it is best to preserve some of them while they are fresh. Join the UCCE Master Food Preservers (MFP) on Tuesday, September 30th and Saturday, October 4th for a free class: Apples Pears and More. The UCCE MFPs will share recipes and techniques for safely preserving apples at home.

Recently I had a couple dozen apples, some from our tree and some from the store. The ones from our tree were not going to last so I had to do something with them. It was the night before a vacation and I did not have a lot of time. I cored and sliced the apples, then put them in a pan with a little water. They cooked down very quickly. I added some cinnamon and sugar to taste – voilà - apple sauce. I would have liked to have canned them, but since I didn't have time - into the freezer they went.

While I was on vacation, I tasted some of my dad's apple cider – it was is very yummy. If you want to make sweet or hard apple cider, download the instructions from the University of Georgia at http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/makingapplecider_uga.pdf.

We recently picked some more apples from another tree. These I plan to dehydrate, which is really easy to do. Wash, core and peel the apples. Cut them into ¼” slices or rings. Pretreat them with ascorbic acid or lemon juice to prevent darkening. At a drying temperature of 140 degrees F, plan on about 5 hours in an electric dehydrator for thin apple slices. To test the apples for dryness, remove a few pieces and let them cool to room temperature. Squeeze a handful; if no moisture is left on your hand and the pieces

spring apart when released, they are dry. For a sweeter flavor, sprinkle the slices with sugar and cinnamon prior to drying.

If you aren't going to eat the dried apples right away, you need to condition them to make sure the remaining moisture is distributed equally among the dried apples. Let them cool and then put them loosely in a plastic bag or glass jar. Let them stand for 7-10 days, shaking the container daily. If any condensation develops, put the (mostly) dried apples in the dehydrator and continue drying. Properly stored, dried fruits keep well for six to 12 months.

Apple Butter and Apple Jelly are also easy and make great gifts for the holidays. Speaking of the holidays – look out – here they come! Wouldn't it be great to get a jump start on those pies? Prepare the pie filling following the recipe below and freeze it. This will really save time later.

Apple Pie Filling

6 pounds tart apples, peeled, cored and sliced
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice

In a 6 to 8 quart pan, combine sugar, flour, cinnamon, nutmeg and lemon juice. Add apples to sugar mixture and stir gently. Then cook, uncovered, over medium heat, stirring often, until the mixture begins to thicken (about 10 minutes). Let cool. Pack in rigid freezer containers or freezer jars, leaving 1 inch headspace; apply lids, label, date and freeze. Yield: about 8 pints.

The rest of this year's annual series of FREE classes are on Tuesdays and/or Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon in the El Dorado County UCCE office at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Download our schedule of classes and a directions here:

http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/Classes.

UCCE Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message on our hotline at (530) 621-5506. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to the our website at

http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our eNewsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.