

Practically Perfect Pickles

Pickles. Sweet, sour, crunchy, chopped, whole, brine, vinegar, fruit, vegetable, meat...whoa, meat? Yes, any fruit, vegetable or meat preserved in vinegar or brine qualifies as a pickle.

Learn more about pickling at the upcoming free public education classes offered by the Master Food Preservers in Amador/Calaveras counties. The class, "Pickled Food and Sauerkraut" is offered on **May 4** in Jackson and will be repeated on **June 1** in San Andreas.

Pickling cabbage at home using fermentation and a brine solution results in the tastiest sauerkraut around. The simple instructions only involve combining salt and shredded cabbage and packing it into a suitable container. Keep the mixture under the brine by weighing down the top, check every few days to ensure that the brine covers the cabbage, and wait 2-3 weeks for the bubbling to stop. At this point the sauerkraut



Making sauerkraut



Pickled carrots, beans, beets, and sauerkraut

has fermented properly. The MFP volunteers at the class will demonstrate the initial steps, show a sample of the finished product, and explain the entire process thoroughly. Take home instruction sheets that list all the steps and necessary equipment.

For those who prefer to indulge in pickled products promptly, the class will demonstrate how to prepare fruits and vegetables using vinegar as the preserving agent. Always use commercial vinegar preparations with 5% acidity (also known as 50 grain) or higher. The acidity level controls the safety of the food, so never dilute or reduce the vinegar in a recipe. Most pickling recipes call for salt. Although any salt may be used, to keep the finished product looking the best, use canning or pickling salt.

Anyone who has ever shopped for specialty pickles, such as pickled green beans or asparagus knows just

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Got a Food Preservation Question?

Amador/Calaveras County
209-223-6857
acmfp@ucdavis.edu

El Dorado County
530-621-5506
edmfp@ucdavis.edu

Sacramento County
916-875-6913

UCCE Central Sierra MFP Website:

<http://ucanr.org/mfpcs>

Practically Perfect Pickles *(Continued from page 1)*

how pricey these items can be. Home pickling not only saves money, but can be a source of pride and fulfillment to those who enjoy serving homemade foods canned without unnecessary chemical additions. And, who can resist creating the best pickles in the whole wide world?

The May 4 class is at the UCCE office in Jackson at 12200-B Airport Road, from 10-Noon.

The June 1 class is at the Calaveras Senior Center in San Andreas at 956 Mountain Ranch Road, from 10-Noon.

The classes are free and reservations are **not** needed.



The Curious Canner

Question: Is it possible to use a water bath canner on a ceramic cook top?

Answer: For a water bath canner to work successfully on a ceramic cook top, the canner bottom must be flat, in contact with the cook top and extend no more than two inches beyond the burner design on the surface of the cook top. Pressure canners typically have a flat bottom and can be used as a water bath canner (without the lid). Before canning on a smooth top range, check the range manufacturer's advice on suitability for canning and recommended maximum canner size for specific burners.



Remember that to water bath can, you just need to have a pot deep enough to allow room for a bottom rack, the jar, and 1-2 inches of boiling water above the jars. If you have a small, deep pot that fits these requirements, you can use it on your ceramic cook top.

Question: Why are canned pears sometimes gritty?

Answer: Tree-ripened pears have a coarse, gritty texture when canned. It is best to pick pears when they are full size but still firm and green. Hold them for about two weeks in cold storage; refrigerator temperatures, 35°F to 40°F, are best. Then allow them to ripen at room temperature before processing.



Sometimes you might can pears and have them turn gray or pink. If you're sure the pears were correctly processed, the color change is related to growing conditions and they are safe to eat.



County Fair Countdown!

Sue Mosbacher, UCCE Master Food Preserver Program Representative

When my daughter was in 4-H, she showed her rabbits, lambs, and swine at local shows and the county fair. A lot of the time she won some kind of ribbon. She kept them on her bedroom wall, and it was fun to see the wall of ribbons expand from one end to the other. Over the last couple of years I've entered items into the El Dorado and Amador county fairs in preserved foods, baked goods, eggs, and agriculture. While I haven't won any top honors in big categories, I have brought home a couple of ribbons each year. I tape my ribbons onto the sliding glass door for a month and then move them to the side of the refrigerator. I feel the child-like pleasure of success each time I walk by. Plus it's fun to go with my family to the fair and show them my entries. It's a happy feeling that makes me feel young! I encourage you to enter your favorite home canned food in the fair.



If you're curious about what the judges look for when evaluating entries, attend the judging session at the fair. The judges explain why they eliminate some entries, what they like about others, and why they placed the winning entries as first, second, and third. It's a good learning experience to help you plan for next year's fair.

If you've been canning this year, pull out some of your better looking entries and enter them into the fair. Below is a list of each county fair's dates, entry deadlines, links to forms and other information. Join the fun and build your own wall of ribbons!



Calaveras County

Dates: May 16-19, 2013

Website: <http://www.frogtown.org>

Judging: Saturday, May 11, 9:00 am

Open to: Residents of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties (Entry deadline has passed)

Visit the
MFP Booth
in Calaveras!



El Dorado County

Dates: June 13-16, 2013

Website: <http://eldoradocountyfair.org/fair.html>

[Entry Forms](#) & [Preserved Food Competition Information](#)

Preserved Food Entries Due: **4pm Wednesday, May 22**

Judging: Saturday, June 8, 9:00 am

Open to: Everyone

Visit the
MFP Booth
in El Dorado!



Tuolumne County

Dates: July 11-14, 2013

Website: <http://www.motherlodefair.org/>

Preserved Food Entries Due: **Monday, June 17**

Judging: TBA

Open to: Residents of Alpine, Calaveras, Mariposa, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne counties



Amador County

Date: July 25-28, 2013

Website: <http://amadorcountyfair.com>

Preserved Food Entries Due: **Saturday, July 6, 6:00 pm**

[Preserved Food Competition Information](#)

Judging: Friday, July 26, 10:00 am

Open to: Residents of Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado & Tuolumne counties

Visit the
MFP Booth
in Amador!

Trying a New Recipe: Preserved Lemons

Sue Mosbacher, UCCE Master Food Preserver Program Representative







A friend recently gave me a large batch of fresh Meyer lemons. I usually juice and freeze them in individual ice cube trays, make some lemonade and lemon curd, and freeze the zest. I've been meaning to try two recipes for the first time: traditional preserved lemons and candied citrus peel. Now is the time. This month I'll share how I made the preserved lemons; next month will be the candied citrus peel.

I enjoy Middle Eastern food, but often times recipes call for preserved lemon. It's not something I can just run down to the supermarket to buy. It's easy to preserve lemons but it does take a couple of weeks—but there's no canning involved and they are supposed to keep well in the refrigerator. Here's a photo log of the process using a recipe from *Ball*. The final steps will be demonstrated at the May 4 and June 1 Amador/Calaveras Master Food Preserver classes.

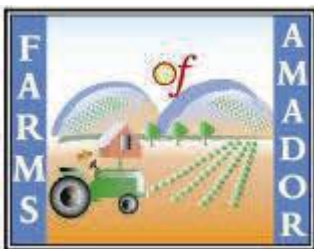
Ingredients: 10 lemons
 4 bay leaves
 1 tsp whole black peppercorns (optional)
 ½ cup pickling or canning salt, divided
 4 cinnamon sticks (each about 4 inches)

The traditional recipe calls for a butterfly cutting technique, but there's a variation using quartered lemons. I'm all for simplicity, so that's the route I chose.

The first thing I did was to sterilize a quart jar and lid.

<p>1) Wash 5 of the lemons in warm water, scrubbing well. Dry with paper towels. Quarter the 5 lemons.</p> 	<p>2) In a large bowl, combine lemon quarters with salt and toss to mix.</p> 	<p>3) Fill the jar halfway, add the bay leaves, cinnamon sticks and optional pepper corns.</p> <p>Continue adding lemons until the jar is filled, pushing lemons well down to squeeze in as many as possible.</p> 
<p>4) Juice the remaining 5 lemons to measure 1½ cups juice. (I added some bottled lemon juice since 5 lemons didn't provide 1½ cups.)</p>  <p>Fill the jar with lemon juice to within ½ inch of the top of the jar.</p>	<p>5) Apply lid, finger tight. Place jar in a dark, cool cupboard for 2 weeks, shaking every day to distribute the salt.</p> 	<p>6) After 2 weeks, the lemons are ready to use. Remove pulp and membrane, using only the peel.</p> <p>Rinse under water to remove excess salt and dry with a paper towel.</p> <p>Store preserved lemons in the refrigerator.</p> 

Cottage Food Law Education Session and Dinner



Please join the Farms of Amador for a delicious dinner and pertinent information on the new possibilities for Cottage Food Production. The Farms of Amador look forward to seeing you for a fun evening of good food, community and learning about the tools we have to improve our local food economy.

Who: Anyone interested in learning about the Cottage Food Law.

What: Dinner & speaker Shermaine Hardesty, UC Davis professor, director of the UC Davis Small Farm Program, expert on the new CA Cottage Food Law.

Why: Because the new [Cottage Food Law, AB 1616](#) allows us to sell some processed food products we produce in our homes. This can be a huge boon for our regional farm, garden, small grocer and farmers market economies. This event will educate us on how to proceed.

When/Where: Friday, May 10, 6 pm dinner, 7 pm speaker at the Amador City Community Hall, 14531 East School St, Amador City, CA

Cost: \$15 general admission, \$10 for FOA members. Please bring a side dish to share and your own place setting.

Pumpkin Pancakes (Pumcakes)

Calaveras Master Food Preservers Dale and Cathy Ansel puree and freeze their homegrown pumpkins in the fall in 1-cup packages to make their favorite pancake recipe throughout the year. According to Cathy, once you try these, you'll be hooked.



Pumpkin Pancakes (Pumcakes)

Combine the following ingredients in a large bowl and set aside.

1½ cups whole milk	1 cup pumpkin puree	1 egg
2 Tbsp vegetable oil	2 Tbsp vinegar	1 tsp vanilla extract

Combine in separate medium bowl:

2 cups flour	3 Tbsp brown sugar	2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda	1 tsp ground allspice	1 tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp ground ginger	½ tsp salt	

(You can substitute the allspice, cinnamon and ginger with 1½ tsp pumpkin spice.)

1. Add your dry ingredients to your wet ingredients and combine well.
2. Heat a lightly oiled griddle over medium-high heat.
3. Pour or scoop ¼ cup batter onto griddle for each pancake.
4. Brown on both sides.

For an extra yummy touch, top pancakes with a dab of freshly whipped cream sweetened with sugar.

Honey, I Hardly Know You!

Kathy Keatly Garvey, UCANR Communications Specialist

Originally published in the [UC Food Blog](#), March 13, 2013

“My jar of honey went bad so I threw it away.” How many times have you heard that?

It did not go “bad” but it did granulate, as honeys do. Granulation is the formation of sugar (glucose) crystals. Reheat the honey and it’s good to go — and eat.

“Most honeys granulate during storage after extended periods of time in containers,” says honey bee specialist/bee wrangler/six-decade beekeeper Norman Gary, emeritus professor in the Department of Entomology at UC Davis and author of the best-selling beginning beekeeping book, *Honey Bee Hobbyist: The Care and Keeping of Bees*.

“Sometimes honey granulates while still sealed in the comb,” Gary says. “The basic reason honey granulates is that the bees have dissolved more sugar in the solution — a process called super saturation — than it can hold during storage. The tendency to granulate is determined primarily by the concentration of glucose. Excess glucose forms crystals of glucose hydrate that aggregate in a lattice in the honey.”



Starthistle honey: granulated or crystallized on the left; liquid honey on the right.



Norman Gary

Eric Mussen, UC Cooperative Extension specialist in Department of Entomology at UC Davis, says that nearly every variety of honey granulates over time, “since it is a supersaturated sugar solution. Hazy, crystallized, or solidified honey is not spoiled. Loosen the cap and place the container in hot water – the honey will return to its liquid state with stirring. When the sugar crystals release free water in honey, it can ferment. At that point it cannot be salvaged.”

Short-bursts in the microwave are also a good way to liquefy honey, Gary says. He advocates heating the glass jars in 30-second intervals, stopping and stirring.

“Monitor the temperature so you don’t have to heat more than necessary to achieve liquefaction.” High temperatures can “cause chemical changes that some purists consider to be heat damage.” It can also change the delicate flavors and darken the honey.

Some honeys do not crystallize or crystallize so readily. Tupelo honey, produced from the nectar of tupelo trees, does not granulate, Gary says.

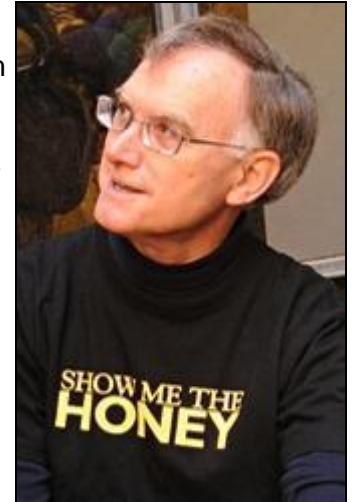
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Honey, I Hardly Know You! (Continued from page 6)

As for the taste of honey, Mussen points out that honey tastes sweeter than sucrose “since it contains free fructose, which tastes sweeter to us than does sucrose. There also is free glucose in honey, but that does not taste exceptionally sweet to us.”

Meanwhile, misconceptions about honey continue to persist. Bees make honey from nectar secreted from flowers. Uninformed children may think brown cows give chocolate milk and that different colors of bees account for the different colors of honey. (Even a business professional told me last week that she thought that a specific honey bee makes orange blossom honey, and another bee makes clover honey.)

“The colors and flavors of honey are properties of the nectar collected by the bees, not of the bees producing the honey,” Mussen says. “Climate impacts the nectar. Honey produced from alfalfa bloom can be transparent or ‘water white;’ golden, as in ‘clover’ honey, or significantly darker, approaching amber, when it is produced in northern Canada, mid-western U.S., or southern U.S., respectively. If you wish to find specific varieties of honey to compare, many varieties and sources can be found at <http://www.honeylocator.com/>, overseen by the National Honey Board.”



Eric Mussen

Mead is another term that puzzles folks. It's an alcoholic beverage made with honey.

“Honey is the basic source of sugar for the fermentation of mead,” Mussen explains. “Meads can be dry or sweet, depending upon the desire of the mead maker. With the addition of spices or fruit juices, meads are called various names: metheglin, hippocras, cyser or pymet.”

And, if you cook with honey, be aware of the properties.

“In baking and beverages honey often can be substituted directly for sugar,” Mussen says. “Lighter colored honeys usually are milder tasting, while the darker honeys are more robust. That is not always the case. Honey has around 17 percent water content, so for baking, it sometimes is good to reduce the volume of other liquids in the recipe. Also, honey tends to turn brown when baking, so reduce the heat by 25 degrees or so if less browning is desired. The finished baked product is apt to remain ‘fresh’ (moist) longer than sugar-based recipes, due to the presence of free fructose that attracts water moisture. Lining the measuring cup with a very thin film of cooking oil will let the honey slip right out, instead of sticking in the cup.”

If you're anxious to sample different honey varieties, head over to Briggs Hall during UC Davis Picnic Day on April 20. Mussen will be offering his traditional free honey tasting. Last year he provided six kinds of honey: California buckwheat, avocado, eucalyptus, sage, orange, and cactus. In the past, visitors also tasted cotton honey, blackberry honey and starthistle honey and others.

Starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), native to Eurasia is an exotic invasive weed hated by just about everybody but the beekeepers and the lovers of starthistle honey.

“Starthistle honey is the champagne of honey,” said Yolo County beekeeper Dennis Price of Good Bee Apiary. “It's the best there is. However, this year's starthistle may not be so good due to the lack of rain.”

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Honey, I Hardly Know You *(Continued from page 7)*

Like to cook with honey? Try the time-tested recipes on the [National Honey Board website](#).

Beekeeper Kim Flottum, editor of *Bee Culture* magazine and author of the book, *The Backyard Beekeeper*, offers a number of recipes in his book, including these two toppings--just in time for spring!

Orange honey butter for cornbread

1/2 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature

1/8 teaspoon salt, or to taste

1 tablespoon orange zest, finely grated (1 medium to large orange)

1 tablespoon honey

Prepared corn bread

Put the softened butter into a bowl with the salt and whisk until creamy. Whisk in the orange zest and then the honey. Whisk until smooth. Warm cornbread at 250 degrees for 5 to 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and brush with a little orange honey butter. Cool about 15 minutes before cutting into wedges. Serve with the remaining butter.

Orange cream spread

1 package (8-ounce) cream cheese

1/4 cup honey, mild

2 tablespoons orange juice

1/2 teaspoon orange peel or zest

Combine softened cream cheese, honey, orange juice, and orange peel. Blend well. Refrigerate at least one hour—overnight is better. Spread on rolls, muffins or croissants.



*Honey bee foraging on pomegranate blossom.
Pomegranate honey is the result. (Photos by Kathy Keatley Garvey)*



Upcoming Master Food Preserver Classes & Events

In the Central Sierra, Sacramento, and San Joaquin Counties



Amador/Calaveras County

Click on the class title to go to our public website and schedule an email reminder for the class.

Saturday, May 4: [Pickled Foods & Sauerkraut](#)

10:00 am—Noon

Location: [Amador County GSA Building](#),
12200-B Airport Road, Jackson

Saturday, June 1: [Pickled Foods & Sauerkraut](#)

10:00 am—Noon

Location: [Calaveras County Senior Center](#),
956 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas

Both classes are free and no reservations are required. Call 209-223-6857 for more information.

El Dorado County

Location: [El Dorado County Fairgrounds](#) from
10 am—Noon

Tuesday, July 9: Food Safety & Basic Water Bath Canning

Saturday, July 13: Food Safety & Basic Water Bath Canning

[Download the full class schedule.](#)

Sacramento County

Location: [Sacramento UCCE office](#) at 4145 Branch Center Road, Sacramento.

Saturday, May 11: All Dried Up

10 am—Noon

Basic introduction to safe dehydration techniques -
Cost: Free

Wednesday, May 15: Cherries and Strawberries

Wed, May 15, 6:30—8:30 pm

Cost: \$3

[Click here for more information.](#)

San Joaquin County



Saturday, June 22: Canning Overview

10 am—Noon

Location: [Morris Nursery](#), 1837 Patterson Road,
Riverbank, CA

For more information, call 209-525-6825.

Does your county not have a MFP program?

The National Center for Home Food Preservation has a free, self-paced, online home canning and preservation course for those who do not live near a county with the UCCE Master Food Preserver program.

Sign up for this online class at <http://nchfp.uga.edu>.



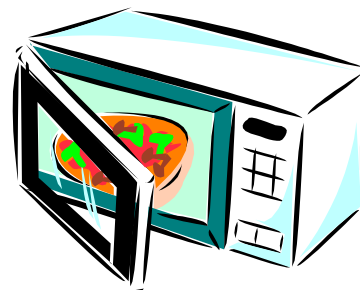
Microwave Myth

Myth:

"If I microwave food, the microwave kills the bacteria, so the food is safe."

Fact:

Microwaves aren't what kill bacteria - it's the heat generated by microwaves that kills bacteria in foods. Microwave ovens are great time-savers and will kill bacteria in foods when heated to a safe internal temperature. However, foods can cook unevenly because they may be shaped irregularly or vary in thickness. Even microwave ovens equipped with a turntable can cook unevenly and leave cold spots in food, where harmful bacteria can survive.



Be sure to follow package instructions and rotate and stir foods during the cooking process, if the instructions call for it. Observe any stand times as called for in the directions. Check the temperature of microwaved foods with a food thermometer in several spots.

Master Food Preserver Services

- Free public classes
- Food preservation hotline
- Free pressure canner testing
- Speakers for custom training for your organization
- Regular articles in local newspapers



To get information about our program, visit our website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/.

Preserving Times is published by the Central Sierra Master Food Preservers.
edmp@ucdavis.edu

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

Free Pressure Canner Gauge Testing

Test your pressure canner gauge for accuracy once a year. Amador, Calaveras, and El Dorado Master Food Preserver all offer this service. Contact the office nearest you to schedule a time to bring in your pressure canner for a FREE test!

UCCE—Amador & Calaveras:
 209-223-6482

UCCE El Dorado:
 530-621-5502



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