

Activity 9: Healthy Food Preservation

Description

Food preservation allows us to take advantage of nature's abundance long after its growing season has ended, and enjoy it year round! By preserving food grown on you own site and supporting local farmers by buying seasonal products to preserve, we help to re-localize our diet and reduce our dependencies on factory food. When we grow our own food or support local farmers, we vote on what we want more of in our lives with our money or with our time; supporting People Care, Earth Care and Fair Share in our local communities.

No matter if you start with a few jars of jam to enjoy or gift, or envision a stocked root cellar brimming with canned, dried, smoked and salted goods as well as hardy vegetables, I wish you the best in your food preservation adventures and hope that these short overviews can serve as a starting point for a new or expanded journey into your permaculture diet!

Teaser activity

It's "common" for food to contain artificial preservatives. That's because they can "prevent spoilage, improve appearance and texture, and maintain the food's nutritional quality". It's not just fast food restaurants using artificial preservatives, either. There are also natural preservatives — like salt, sugar, vinegar and citrus juice — but using them usually comes at a higher cost to the food manufacturer.

Artificial preservatives help decrease the price of that food product for the consumer. But alongside these benefits, there may be some health concerns that come along with artificial preservatives. Artificial preservatives are chemical substances that get added to food during the manufacturing process.

Some of the most popular are sodium benzoate, sorbic acid, butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT).

- Sodium benzoate is a preservative and microbial agent used in tomato products, pickles, sauces, fruits, fruit salads, jams, cider, salad dressing, and some meat and poultry products.
- On labels, sorbic acid is sometimes called calcium sorbate or potassium sorbate. "[It's] a preservative used in jams, cold-processed smoked and salted fish paste, concentrate juice (except frozen concentrate juice), minced meat, marmalade with pectin, jam, syrup, pickles, relishes, smoked or salted dried fish, ketchup, tomato paste, tomato puree, margarine and salad dressing."
- BHA and BHT are preservatives with "antioxidant properties". They help fats stay fresh longer by preventing the oils from becoming rancid. They're used in fats and oils, potato chips, dried breakfast cereals, parboiled rice and chewing gum.

Some artificial preservatives, such as nitrites or nitrates used in processed meats, have been shown to be bad for our health. Consuming these preservatives has been shown to increase our risk of colon cancer and should be limited in our diets" In an effort to avoid artificial preservatives, some people try to use natural preservatives. However, natural doesn't always mean healthier.

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For example, alternative preservatives that are ‘all natural’ can include things like sugar and salt. We know that excess amounts of these in our diets aren’t healthy for us, even if they do come from natural sources. Choosing to use natural preservatives can also be more expensive.

If you do want to avoid artificial preservatives, you can do so by closely examining package labels. These ingredients are usually listed at the very end of the list as they are only used in small quantities. Find food labels at home or in a shop and take a picture of the label. Find the unhealthy ingredients.

Competences addressed

Ecological competences:

- Development of documentation skills
- Demonstrating an understanding of the consequences of one's behavior in relation to the environment and their health
- Demonstrating an ecological way of thinking in making decisions
- Understanding the importance of natural food preservation.
- knowledge about food preservation techniques and their advantages.

Social competences:

- Ability to collaborate with other adults
- Developing interpersonal relationships and strengthening the skills needed for teamwork.
- Ability to appreciate diversity and multiculturalism
- Stimulating creativity and developing a competitive and innovative spirit, as well as teamwork.

Learning objectives

- Training and cultivating adults' interest and responsibility for healthy food preservation
- Empowering adults to engage in healthy food preservation.
- Provide adults with knowledge about healthy preservation techniques.
- Stimulating the critical and self-critical spirit regarding interpretation of food labels

Group characteristics

Can be used with any group of adults. In the game you choose the preservation method, you will split participants in groups of maximum 5.

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Preparation for the activity

Prepare cards with food examples (20) and cards with methods of preservation (photo and description of method on the back) – 1 set for every group.

The activity / the content

Participants share labels of food and present the unhealthy ingredients. If we have different opinions, we debate to find the scientific truth.

We split the group in 4-5 smaller groups of maximum 5 participants.

Every group will draw 5 food cards and will receive a set of preservation techniques.

They have to read about the preservation techniques and match the food with the appropriate techniques.

After the participants share their results and debate if there are differences.

Every group will choose a preservation technique and will design a short video add to present the technique and its advantages compared to mass production preservation techniques. The trainers help them define the message.

They film and share the ads.

Questions for reflection, self-assessment and conclusions

- What did today's activity consist of?
- What natural preservation method have you used before?
- What natural spices/ herbs do you use to improve the taste, nutritional value and preservation time?

How can we apply what we have learned in our daily lives?

Recommendations on how to adapt to different target groups

If there is no access to a kitchen, the tool can be used without the second part.

References

<https://www.permaculturedesign.ca/>