

Extension food preservation workshops help prevent foodborne illness

The Situation

Food safety is a top priority when considering home preserved foods. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 1 in 6 Americans get sick each year from a foodborne illness. Several of pathogens that cause foodborne illness are naturally found in foods preserved at home or spread by improper handling of foods at home. Examples include *salmonella*, *clostridium perfringens*, and norovirus.

According to a 2004 CDC report, improperly home-canned food remains the main source for the dangerous foodborne botulism neurotoxins. Idaho ranked among the top three states of reported botulism cases over the 10-year period the report examined. The cost to the public resulting from botulism events is expensive with an estimated value at \$322,000 per case. The cost becomes priceless when the possible loss of life exists.

Citizens living in Eastern Idaho expressed an increased interest in safe food preservation when the economy was in a downturn in 2010. Economic conditions contributing to interest in home food preservation continue. Other factors that influence a desire to preserve food at home include many Eastern District citizens growing their own gardens. An interest in eating locally grown produce continues as well.

Our Response

Increased interest in home food preservation was the impetus for a team of Eastern District Extension faculty to offer food preservation classes yearly since 2010. Educators divided a five-week series of lessons between one another. Classes for 2012 were presented in Bannock, Bonneville, and Lemhi counties. Lemhi was a new county in the series.



Bannock County food preservation class members busily making salsa.

The curricula was modeled after the University of Idaho's Master Food Safety Advisor's training. Topics included Canning Basics, Canning High Acid Foods, Canning Low Acid Foods, Freezing, Drying, Pickling and Canning Preserves. All class participants received a copy of the USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning and numerous University of Idaho Extension food safety publications. They also participated in hands-on lab experiences with the high acid, low acid, freezing and drying, and pickling and preserves classes in order to practice their new knowledge and increase their food preservation skills.

Program Outcomes

University of Idaho Extension FCS educators seek to make a positive impact in class members' lives. To determine if the classes were effective, participants completed a retrospective class evaluation at the conclusion of the class series. Thirty-nine participants

completed the evaluation in 2012. The following are some of the results:

Why did you attend the food preservation classes?	Yes (%)
To be in control of what's in my food	74
To save money	51
To be more self-sufficient	85
To better use the produce I grow	87

As a result of attending these classes, you may have changed some of your ideas or behaviors.

- a. Which of the following did you learn?
- b. Didn't already do this before class?
- c. Will you do this after taking the class

	a (%)	b (%)	c (%)
Used up-to-date tested, resource based recipes and recommendations when canning foods	80	31	67
Adjusted processing time for altitude when processing foods in a boiling water canner	59	28	56
Adjusted for altitude when pressure canning by increasing the pressure as recommended for your elevation	64	21	62
Processed all high acid foods including jams, jellies, pickles and relishes in a boiling water canner according to research-based recommendations	46	23	59
When making home canned salsa, followed a tested research based recipe and processed according to recommendations	72	36	56

The knowledge and skills gained in the food preservation classes will help reduce the risk of food borne illness, including the deadly *botulism*. As a class member stated: "Botulism can kill!" District FCS Educators were pleased to have another class member clearly tell us that he/she learned to "follow tested recipes exactly." These results encourage us to continue offering food preservation classes into the foreseeable future. District FCS educators will continue offering food preservation classes in future years. Plans include unifying presentation and handout formats and offering classes in additional counties in the district.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Char Byington & Audrey Liddil, Extension Educators
Tracy Green, ENP Coordinator
 University of Idaho Extension, Bannock County
 10560 N. Fairgrounds Road
 Pocatello, ID 83201
 Phone: 208.236.7311
 Fax: 208.236.7316
 E-mail: byington@uidaho.edu
 E-mail: aliddil@uidaho.edu
 E-mail: tracygr@uidaho.edu

Marnie Spencer, Extension Educator
 University of Idaho Extension, Bingham County
 583 W. Sexton St.
 Blackfoot, ID 83221
 Phone: 208.785.8060
 Fax: 208.785.2511
 E-mail: marniers@uidaho.edu

Becky Dahl, FCS Educator
 University of Idaho Extension, Bonneville County
 2925 Rollandet
 Idaho Falls, ID 83402
 Phone: 208.529.1390
 Fax: 208.529.1391
 E-mail: bdahl@uidaho.edu

Laura Sant, Extension Educator
 University of Idaho Extension, Franklin County
 561 W. Oneida
 Preston, ID 83263
 Phone: 208.852.1097
 Fax: 208.852.2812
 E-mail: lsant@uidaho.edu

Katie Hoffman, Extension Educator
 University of Idaho Extension, Lemhi County
 200 Fulton, Suite 202
 Salmon, ID 83467
 Phone: 208.756.2815
 Fax: 208.756.6915
 E-mail: khoffman@uidaho.edu