



ON CALL

Lay Community Health Advisors

Food storage and preservation

Introduction

This short handbook will provide you with some additional information about reason of preserving foods, list of types of food that can be preserved, and list of various ways to safely storage and preserve food. You will find here a short description of each of most popular methods, their history and role in today's cuisine. This handbook will also be useful in promoting positive mental health with members of your local health network.

People have been preserving food since ancient times. As most kind of foods are tough to acquire in winter and early spring, people needed to find ways to store it in times of harvest, and keep it safe and edible for winter time. Although older methods did their job, most of them leave meals dry, salty or fermented and spoil the taste and structure of food.

Food preservation has improved through the ages. People still use some older methods like smoking or drying, but have tools to make it easier. Even if we don't risk starvation today, preserving food is still an important issue as it allows us to have valuable and more diverse diet during winter.

Modern ways of food preservation include refrigerating, freezing, canning,

pasteurization, irradiation, and the addition of chemicals.

The message of this resource is to teach people what kind of foods can be preserved in what way to keep most of its nutritional value and taste.

Keep it cool

Keeping your food in low temperatures slow down spoilage processes, because bacteria, yeast, and mold needs warm temperatures to grow. Since 20th century, thanks to popularity and quality of refrigerators and freezers, is the easiest way to preserve food.

Freezing doesn't change taste, but it can change structures in fruits and vegetables. You can freeze most products, almost without preparing it for this process first – especially meat, fish, cheese or bread. Freezing e.g. eggs is quite more complicated yet possible. All vegetables and fruits can be frozen without significant lost of their nutritional value.

Keep it dry

Removing moisture allows food to last for months retaining many nutrients, as bacteria, yeast, and mold cannot survive without water.

Drying, also known as dehydrating is one of the oldest ways of food preservation that works best for herbs, fruits, vegetables and meats. Back then people preserved food by leaving fruits, vegetables, meat, herbs etc. lying on a flat surface in sunny place. This technique was popular especially in dry, warm climates.

Nowadays drying can be done in fastest and more efficient artificial way by using electric dehydrating machine.

Add some salt

Another way to keep your food edible and nutritious for a long time is to preserve it by adding salt. It is quite similar method to drying as salt draws out moisture from foods. This method works best for meats and fish.

Preserving pieces of meat by salting is really popular during wars as its rich in calories and minerals (mainly thanks to salt), and really easy to carry everywhere in a backpack.

Put it in a can

The canning method was developed in 1795 by a French chemist and for a first time it was used to preserve food for Napoleon's army.

Term 'canning' includes not only preserving foods in cans, but also in glass

jars. When it comes to canning, the most important thing is to sterilise your cans or jars before putting food into it. This method helps to keep food edible after long time thanks to both, thermal treatment, but also keeping food in vacuum. – If we boil jars with loosely tighten lids, they will vacuum seal while cooling down.

Canning is a popular way of preserving fruits, vegetables and meats.

Pickle it

Pickling method is a bit similar to canning methods. The only difference is that when you want to pickle some vegetables you need to add salt and acid (most often vinegar)

Pickled vegetables have an increased level of vitamin B6 as fermentation process causes vitamin boost.

Smoke it

Smoking your food not only withdraws water from your food not letting microbes to start spoilage process, but also it will give your food nice, smoked taste.

Smoking is mostly used for preserving meat, and it is usually done in the chimney or in the oven, by providing right amount of heat – just to dry, not to cook – for a long time. The taste of meat depends on

the length of time it was smoked, and type of wood that was used for that process.

Where to store it?

After you are done with preserving, next step is to find a place to keep all this food. If we want our food to last long we need to keep it in the dark and cold place like basement or cellar.

If you don't have cellar, you can use an unheated room or a wardrobe as a pantry. Vegetables (e.g. carrots, potatoes, pumpkins) are best to be kept underground in dark, cold and dry basements or dugouts.

How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?

This handbook presents some introductory information on the topic of food storage and preservation. It presents some facts about mentioned topic and tip which types of food are better preserved which way in order to preserve their taste and nutritional value for a long time.

It is worthwhile to review this handbook before your session with the group so that you are supported to facilitate a discussion about food preservation and storage.

Bear in mind that this handbook mentions only most popular methods for food preservation, and some of your students may be more familiar with either different methods of food preservation and storage

or different varieties of mentioned methods. Use this variety to your advantage and ask them to share those methods with group, making activity even more interesting.

To accompany this handbook, you will also find a short PowerPoint presentation that can be used with your local health network to introduce different methods of food preservation and storage and an explanation of why it is important to do so. Use this resource to start a conversation in the group about the topic.

Group Activity

Once you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group members, you can start a group discussion about preservation and storage methods they are familiar with.

Once all group members have shared some examples from their own experience, ask them if in their opinion knowledge about food preservation could help their local community members in some way – for example by saving money, or bring people together by sharing recipes.

Let your group think about the importance of familiar tastes to people living in other countries. Preparing homemade food they remember from their own childhood may help migrants feel better in new

environment and help to enrich culture of the host country.

Ask your group what kind of preservation methods they remember from their home land and ask them if they can be used on same ingredients.

After discussion give each of the participants a piece of paper and ask them

to write down a recipe for preserving food of their choice with the method of their choice. Once they are done get all sheets together and combine it in one culinary book. You can name it after the nationalities of people in your group (e.g. Polish-Ukrainian Culinary Book).





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