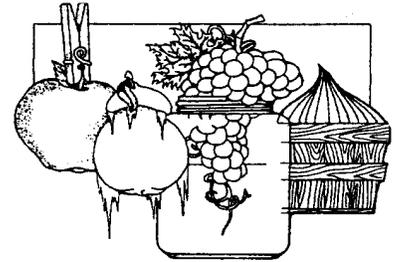


Quality for Keeps



Information for those who produce and preserve food

Summer squash still abundant

When households are tired of zucchini bread, zucchini stir-fry, and zucchini pancakes, it is time to stuff the freezer and pickle the extra zucchini. Summer squash should be plentiful into early fall.

Summer squash includes: zucchini, cocozelle, yellow crook-neck, straightneck, white scallop, and patty pan varieties. Winter squash are related, but have hard skins and include: pumpkin, acorn, buttercup, and banana squash.

Selection. Choose freshly harvested squash that have not been left on the vine too long, as they become tough. Smaller squash are more tender.

Wash well in cold water. Handle carefully as summer squash bruise easily.

Storage. Store summer squash at 45-55° F (or in refrigerator crisper drawer) for 2-4 days.

Freezing. Summer squash, like most vegetables, must be blanched before freezing. Blanching stops enzyme actions that can cause loss of flavor, color and texture. For freezing, 1¼ pounds of fresh zucchini will equal about 1 pint frozen. One bushel (40 pounds) yields 32 to 40 pints frozen squash.

To blanch squash, wash and cut summer squash into 1/2-inch slices. Add no more than 1 pound of squash (4-6 cups) to 1 gallon boiling water. Blanch squash for 3 minutes. Immediately chill 3 minutes in ice water. Drain.

Pack into pint- or quart-size freezer bags. Remove excess air. Seal, label and freeze.

To freeze squash slices so that they do not stick together, freeze in a single layer on a cookie sheet. Once frozen, place into freezer bags or rigid freezer containers. Properly packaged and frozen, squash will keep 10 months in the freezer.

Canning. The heat required to can squash results in the squash flesh turning into mush and sinking to the bottom of the canning jar. The compacted flesh will not heat evenly. **Therefore, all process times and temperatures are unsafe. Never attempt to can zucchini or other summer squash.**

Dried squash. Blanch squash slices as above, except add 1 teaspoon/gallon ascorbic acid to the blanching water to prevent darkening. Drain and place slices in a single layer on a dehydrator tray.



Dry at 140-145° F for 8-10 hours, or until slices are crisp and brittle.

Ten pounds of fresh squash will yield about ¾ pound dried product. To store, pack cooled, dried foods in small amounts in glass jars, or in moisture and vapor-proof freezer containers, boxes or bags. Store in a cool, dry, dark place. Dried squash should store for several months.

Vacuum packaging. Vacuum packaging can extend the shelf life of either frozen or dried squash. Vacuum packaging cannot be used as a food preservation method alone. Follow manufacturer's directions. After packaging, return frozen squash to the freezer.

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Think less salt when canning, but not pickling

The latest dietary recommendations recommend that Americans reduce their salt intake to 1,500 milligrams of sodium per day for older Americans, or members of ethnic groups with high risk of high blood pressure.

Salt is an optional ingredient in most home-canned foods, and is added to canned foods for flavor rather than safety. Thus, home-canned green beans, tomatoes, and meat can be safely canned without any added salt, according to current canning directions. Vegetables, meats, and combination foods must be canned in a pressure canner, no matter if salt is added or omitted.

However, salt is an essential ingredient for fermented pickles and sauerkraut, and may never be omitted or reduced in these products. In fermented sauerkraut and brined pickles, salt not only provides characteristic flavor, but also is vital to safety, since it helps desirable bacteria to grow, while inhibiting the growth of others.

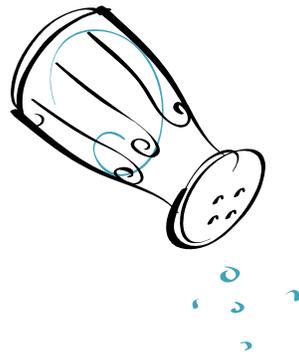
Therefore, do not attempt to make sauerkraut or fermented pickles by cutting back on the salt required.

Salt is available in several forms:

- Canning salt or pickling salt is pure salt. It contains no additives. This is the best choice for canning, pickling, and sauerkraut.
- Table salt contains anti-caking additives that may make the

brine cloudy or produce sediment at the bottom of the jar. Table salt labeled as iodized salt is not recommended for fermenting pickles and sauerkraut, or for canning, because the iodine may cause them to darken, discolor, or be spotty. It will also cause unusual colors to form in some vegetables. For example—cauliflower will sometimes turn pink or purple.

- Kosher salt is a coarse, flaked, pure salt that can also be used in canning. Its crystalline form



measures differently from regular salt. Since flaked salt may vary in density, do not use for making pickled and fermented foods where salt concentration is a critical factor for microbial growth.

- Sea salt is evaporated sea water and contains various minerals. It is safe to eat, but minerals in the salt may cause canned foods to discolor. Use sea salt for cooking purposes, not canning.
- Rock salt, ice cream salt, and solar salt are used to melt ice,

freeze homemade ice cream, and to soften water. These are not suitable for human consumption, and should not be used for home food preservation.

- Salt substitutes contain chemicals that provide a salty flavor, but contain little or no sodium. Do not use salt substitutes for canning. Most salt substitutes contain potassium chloride. Do not substitute potassium chloride for sodium chloride in fermentation recipes. Using a salt substitute will lower the acid content by changing which fermentation bacteria grow in the product, and make the product unsafe to eat or quick to spoil. One way to lower the sodium content of sauerkraut or pickles is to rinse the product with water just before heating and serving. But never do this before canning.

When canning vegetables and meat, can the product without salt, and add the salt substitute when serving the food. To avoid the addition of salt or salt substitutes, enhance flavor of unsalted canned foods with a variety of spices and herbs blends.

Source: Penn State Food Preservation. July 24, 2012. <http://extension.psu.edu/food-safety/food-preservation/news/2012/types-of-salt-and-salt-substitutes-in-canning>

Seasonal and simple App available now

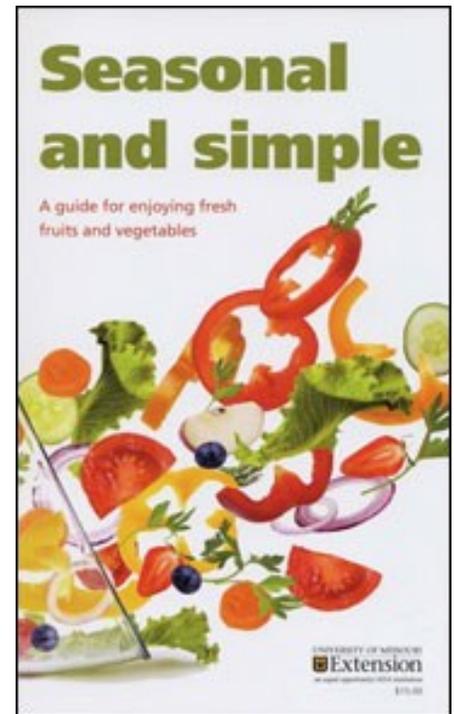
By *Janet Hackert, nutrition and health education specialist*

The smart phone application for *Seasonal and Simple* is free to download and is available online at:

<http://seasonalandsimple.info>

The application is based on the MU Extension publication *Seasonal and Simple*, a guide for selecting and using Missouri produce. It describes a variety of vegetables and fruits that are grown locally in Missouri. It includes familiar produce such as apples and broccoli, and others like okra and kohlrabi that not everyone knows how to handle. The guide has a seasonal chart showing when to expect each item to be available locally. It gives nutritional information, explains how to select ripe produce, what part(s) are edible, how to prepare the fruit or vegetable, and how to store it.

The app has a variety of serving suggestions and recipes for each item. They include hot and cold options and a mix of cooking methods. Many recipes are simple to make. You can watch Chef **Brook Harlan** demonstrate four of the recipes online: <http://extension.missouri.edu/healthylife/demovideos.htm>



A feature that was added to the application version is a “Find it” option that enables consumers to find farmers markets in or near each Missouri county.

The app can be downloaded:



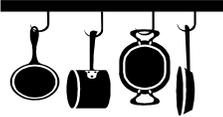
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.missouri.extension.seasonalandsimple>



<http://itunes.com/apps/Seasonalandsimple>

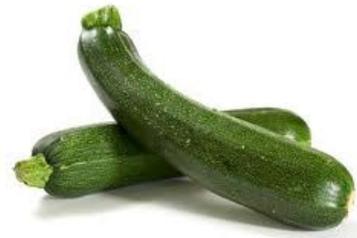
Download *Seasonal and Simple* for free and take it with you to your local farmers market, produce stand or grocery store and know for sure what the perfect fruit or vegetable should look, feel and/or smell like before it is purchased. Check out the recipes while shopping and get the other ingredients you will need while you are at it. Then go home and have your fresh produce in a seasonal and simple meal or snack.

THE RECIPE BOX



Zucchini-Pineapple

- 4 quarts cubed or shredded zucchini
- 46 oz. can unsweetened pineapple juice
- 1-1/2 cups bottled lemon juice
- 3 cups sugar



Procedure: Peel zucchini and cut into either 1/2-inch cubes or shred. Mix zucchini with other ingredients in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Simmer 20 minutes. Fill hot jars with hot mixture and cooking liquid, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel. Adjust lids. Process pints or half-pints in a boiling water bath canner for 15 minutes at altitudes of 0 to 1,000 feet. At altitudes of 1,001 to 3,000 feet process pints and half-pints in a boiling water bath canner for 20 minutes.

Source: USDA. *The complete Guide to Home Canning*, http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/usda/3_USDAcanningGuide2_06.pdf

Quality for Keeps, published monthly, April through October, is made available to residents of East Central and Southeast Missouri by their Extension Councils. Contact your county Extension office to subscribe, or visit our website <http://missouri.extension.edu/franklin>. Questions may be directed to:

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