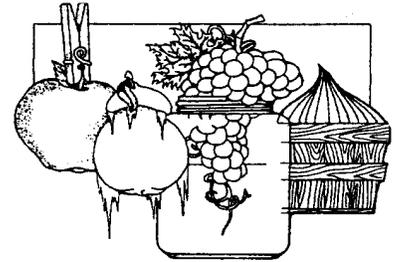


Quality for Keeps



Information for those who produce and preserve food

Prepare now for freezin' season

*W*elcome Spring! And—all of our valued *Quality for Keeps* readers! A warm welcome back to Linda Rellergert, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist in St. Charles County. She'll be taking Judy Lueders' place in writing for *QFK* along with Mary Schroepfer.

Judy has retired and is looking forward to relaxing and having more time with her family. She enjoyed sharing information on safe food preservation practices with *QFK* readers.

Like Mary, Linda has more than 30 years experience in teaching and writing about home food preservation. If you are a long-time subscriber, you will remember she was one of the *QFK* writers a few years back.

So, now that we are reacquainted, let's get started!

April is the perfect month to get freezers ready for the new crop of spring fruits and vegetables.

Defrosting. If more than 1/2-inch of frost has accumulated, defrost freezer so it will operate more efficiently.

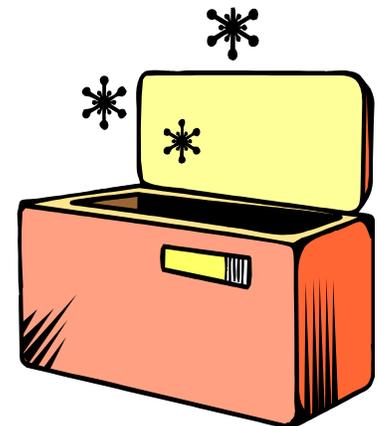
- Turn off and unplug the freezer. Place food in ice chests or freezer compartment of refrigerator.

- Place pans of warm, (not hot), water in freezer to speed thawing. Close freezer door.
- Use a plastic ice scraper or spatula to loosen chunks of ice. Do not use sharp tools like knives, ice picks or screw drivers, which can damage the freezer.
- Wash freezer interior, gaskets and around the door with baking soda and warm water, (about 2 tablespoons baking soda per gallon of warm water). Let freezer air dry before plugging it back in and turning on.
- Organize and replace food so oldest items are on top. Update freezer inventory, or make a list of type and number of packages in freezer. Keep list in a handy spot or tape to the freezer door. Update it every time something is taken out of freezer.
- Make sure the door is closed securely and freezer is operating correctly.

Take note of foods left from last year. Are there some that were better than others? List new foods or recipes to try this year. If some-

thing did not turn out quite the way expected, give Mary or Linda a call to help get a better understanding as to what could have gone wrong, so this will be a more successful year. (contact information is on page 4).

Check supply of freezer containers, packaging materials and markers on hand. Start looking for sales on these items and buy what is needed. Buy only materials specifically labeled for freezer storage to provide the best protection from freezer burn.



Inside this issue:

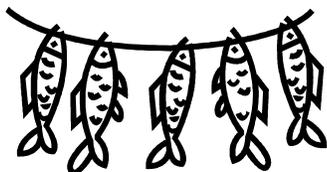
Safety and fish	2
Asparagus	3
Asparagus, Peas and Pasta	4

Not all fishing holes are equal

Missouri's streams, rivers and lakes are home to a wide variety of fish species such as: bass, catfish, crappie, northern pike, trout, walleye, paddlefish, and sturgeon among others. Fishing seasons, regulations and licenses are available to anglers on the Missouri Department of Conservation website: <http://mdc.mo.gov/fishing>.

Fish is a wonderful source of high-quality protein, heart healthy fatty acids and other essential nutrients that make it part of a healthy diet. Some fish, like trout, are high in omega-3 fatty acids that are essential in development of our central nervous system and have been shown to help reduce heart disease.

Unfortunately, most waterways in the United States, including Missouri, have some chemical contamination that can have health consequences. This is especially important for pregnant women, nursing mothers and children younger than 13 who are more sensitive to harm from such pollutants. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, (MODHSS), publishes an annual Missouri fish advisory with specific recommendations for these sensitive populations and all consumers. It is available to download at: <http://health.mo.gov/living/environment/fishadvisory/pdf/fishadvisory.pdf>.



Specific information for sensitive populations include the following:

- Eat no more than one meal per month of walleye, largemouth bass, spotted bass and smallmouth bass greater than 12-inches in length, and white bass greater than 15-inches long from Clearwater Lake.
- Limit all other sport fish to one meal per week.

The Advisory publication lists some additional tips for all consumers:

- Some fish from Missouri streams typically have very low levels of pollutants—mercury, PCB and chlordane. These are: trout, crappie (except those from Clearwater Lake), sunfish (except green sunfish), and suckers.
- Meal size as defined in the advisory is 8 ounces of uncooked fish for a 150-pound person and 3 ounces for a 40-pound child.
- Smaller or younger fish tend to have lower levels of contaminants than older fish, so keep smallest legal-size and release lunkers.
- Reduce chemical levels in fish by filleting and carefully trimming away any fat when fish is cleaned. Filleting will not reduce levels of some chemicals, such as mercury.
- Do not eat sturgeon eggs.
- Eat no more than one meal per month of shovelnose sturgeon from Missouri and Mississippi rivers.

- Do not eat fish bones, even tiny ones. Lead accumulates in bones of fish at much higher concentrations than in other parts of fish. Fish caught in areas where lead mining occurred in the past such as: Jasper, Madison, Jefferson, St. Francois, Washington and Iron counties are likely to have high amounts of lead in their bones and special care should be taken to avoid eating them. For this reason, do not can, pickle or grind suckers, carp or sunfish from these areas.

For additional advisories about fish from the Missouri, Mississippi, and sections of the Blue River, Big River, Turkey Creek, Big Creek and Simpson Park Lake, please see the MODHSS Advisory publication.

For specific information on freezing fish, check these publications:

GH1501 Freezing Basics:
<http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/hesguide/foodnut/gh1501.pdf>.

Quality for Keeps July 2012, freezing fish, The One That Didn't Get Away:

<http://extension.missouri.edu/franklin/documents/qfk/12julyqfk.pdf>.

GH1504 Freezing Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs and Dairy Products:
<http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/hesguide/foodnut/gh1504>.

Asparagus—a perennial favorite

Asparagus is a springtime treat that makes any meal a gourmet feast. This hardy perennial was enjoyed by the Greeks and Romans, as it is a native of lands around the Mediterranean. A member of the lily family, asparagus is related to onions and leeks, and is a good source of vitamins A, C, B6, folic acid and potassium.

Varieties. Asparagus may be white, green, pink and purple. Green is most common. White is produced by growing asparagus in rows covered with soil to prevent development of chlorophyll. It has a more powerful, somewhat bitter flavor.

Newer varieties such as Jersey Giant, Jersey Knight, Jersey Prince, Syn 53, Syn 4-362, UC 157 and Viking KBC, have been developed in recent years. They produce mostly male plants, which are preferred as they have thicker, larger spears than female plants. Well-tended asparagus beds can last for 20 to 30 years. Therefore, plant the best varieties currently available.

Selection. Choose firm, tender spears with deep green or purplish tips that are tightly closed and compact. Avoid partially open or wilted tips and flat or twisted stalks. Both thin and thick stalks will be tender, if both are of high quality. However, thick stalks require longer cooking. Choose spears that are similar in thickness so cooking times will be similar.

Storage. Unless it will be cooked shortly after harvest, cut one inch off bottom of stalk and place up-

right in 1-inch of water. Or, wrap cut ends with a damp paper towel and place in a plastic bag. Asparagus should be kept refrigerated and used within 2 to 3 days. For very best flavor, use asparagus the same day as bought or harvested.

Prepare. Wash asparagus just before using under cold running water. Trim about 1-inch off stem end and peel stalk with vegetable peeler. Add peelings to cooking water for extra flavor. To prepare without peeling, snap off tough ends.

Enjoy fresh asparagus lightly seasoned with lemon juice or a sprinkle of grated Parmesan cheese. Cook briefly and chill to serve as a salad with a light vinaigrette dressing. Sauté and add to pasta, quiche or stir fry dishes.

Freezing. Select young tender spears. Wash thoroughly and sort into sizes. Trim stalks and remove scales with a sharp knife. Cut into even lengths to fit containers or sizes suitable for intended use.

Water blanch thin spears 2 minutes, medium spears 3 minutes and thick spears 4 minutes. Cool promptly, drain, package, seal and freeze.

Freezing is the best method of preserving asparagus, although it can also be canned in a pressure canner.

Canning. For 8 to 12 quart jars, prepare 24 pounds of fresh asparagus. A crate weighs 30 pounds and yields 10 to 15 quarts, an average of 2 to 3 pounds per quart.

Use tender, tight-tipped spears, 4 to 6 inches long.

Procedure.

Wash asparagus and trim off tough scales.

Break off tough stems and wash again. Cut into 1-inch pieces, or can whole.

Hot pack: cover asparagus with boiling water. Boil pieces 2 minutes, or whole spears 3 minutes. Loosely fill jars with hot asparagus; leave 1-inch headspace.

Raw pack: fill jars with raw asparagus, pack as tightly as possible without crushing, and leave 1-inch of headspace.

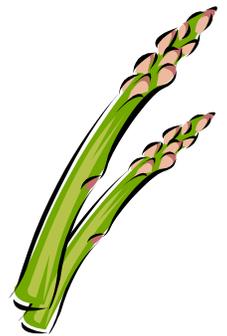
Add one teaspoon canning salt per quart if desired. Add boiling water; leaving 1-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel. Adjust lids and process.

Process pints for 30 minutes at 11 pounds pressure in a dial-gauge canner, or 10 pounds in a weighted-gauge canner.

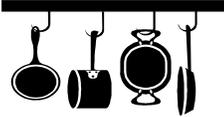
Process quarts for 40 minutes at 11 pounds pressure in a dial-gauge canner, or 10 pounds in a weighted-gauge canner.

At altitudes above 1,000 feet with a weighted-gauge canner, process pints 30 minutes and quarts 40 minutes at 15 pounds pressure.

Sources: GH1503 Freezing Vegetables and GH1454 Preserve Your Garden Delights: How to Can Fresh Vegetables, University of Missouri Extension, 2010



THE RECIPE BOX



Asparagus, Peas and Pasta

- 2 cups penne pasta
- 1/2 pound fresh asparagus, cut diagonally into 1-inch pieces, or 1 cup frozen asparagus pieces
- 1/2 pound peas, removed from pods, or 1/2 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano

Procedure: Prepare pasta according to package directions. Add asparagus and peas for the last minute of cooking. Drain pasta and vegetables and toss with olive oil, cheese and oregano. Makes 6 servings. Nutrition information per serving: 243 calories, 13g protein, 8g fat, 30g carbohydrate, 2.6g fiber, 314mg sodium, 218mg potassium.

Source: Adapted from "Seasonal and Simple" - A Guide for Enjoying Fresh Fruits & Vegetables", University of Missouri Extension, 2009.

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

Mary Schroepfer

Mary Schroepfer
Nutrition & Health Specialist
116 W. Main
Union, MO 63084
Ph: (636) 583-5141
Fax: (636) 583-5145
Email: SchroepferM@missouri.edu

EAST CENTRAL OFFICES:

Callaway	573-642-0755
Cole	573-634-2824
Crawford	573-775-2135
Dent	573-729-3196
Franklin	636-583-5141
Gasconade	573-437-2165
Lincoln	636-528-4613
Maries	573-422-3359
Miller	573-369-2394
Montgomery	573-564-3733
Osage	573-897-3648
Phelps	573-458-6260
Pulaski	573-774-6177
St. Francois	573-756-4539
Ste. Genevieve	573-883-3548
Warren	636-456-3444
Washington	573-438-2671

Linda A. Rellergert

Linda Rellergert
Nutrition and Health Education Specialist
260 Brown Rd.
St. Peters, MO 63376
Ph: (636) 970-3000
Fax: (636) 279-3310
Email: RellergertL@missouri.edu

URBAN AREA OFFICES:

St. Charles	636-970-3000
St. Louis	314-615-2911
St. Louis City	314-367-2585
Jefferson	636-797-5391