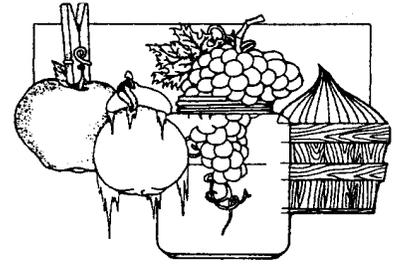


Quality for Keeps



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Information for those who produce and preserve food

Where the wild things are...

Gathering and preserving wild foods in preparation for the coming winter is an age old fall tradition. Hunters and gatherers stored food to survive until spring and summer crops ripened. Today, these practices are no longer necessary for survival, but can be a way to continue family traditions.

When hunting and gathering in the wild, be sure to seek permission from landowners or the appropriate agency before digging, picking or hunting. Check a reliable publication, or with an experienced gatherer knowledgeable about the identity of wild edibles to correctly identify any species collected. Finally, collect wild edibles away from busy roads where they are less likely to have been sprayed with pesticides or diesel exhaust.

For more information about wild edibles, download "*Wild Edibles of Missouri*", by Jan Phillips, from the Missouri Department of Conservation website: <http://mdc.mo.gov/>. For more current information and recipes, "*Cooking Wild in Missouri*", by Bernadette Dryden, is also available from the Missouri Department of Conservation.

Preserving nuts. Missouri offers several tree nut species—pecans, hickories and black walnuts. Suppliers typically sell cracked nuts in the shell in plastic bags. Remove cracked nuts from plastic bags immediately and spread out on trays in an airy location to dry thoroughly. If left in plastic bags, cracked nuts are susceptible to mold growth. Return or discard any nuts showing mold growth.

Unshelled nuts have a longer shelf life than shelled nuts. Properly dried unshelled nuts will keep for several weeks at room temperature. Store unshelled nuts in airtight containers in a cool, dry, dark location, below 70°F for up to 4 months.

Whole, shelled nutmeats remain fresh longer than nuts in pieces, so chop nuts just before using. Unsalted nuts keep longer than salted. For long-term storage, package shelled nuts in moisture-vapor-proof containers and store in the refrigerator for up to 6 months, or the freezer for up to 12 months.

For more information on toasting and using nuts, see the November, 2010 issue of Quality for Keeps at: [http://extension.missouri.edu/franklin/documents/QFK/10Oct-NovQFK\(1\).pdf](http://extension.missouri.edu/franklin/documents/QFK/10Oct-NovQFK(1).pdf).



Preserving game. Fall is hunting season for many deer and several bird species. Information on using and preserving game is available from several reputable websites. North Dakota Extension has two publications, "*Wild Side of the Menu No. 2, Field to Freezer*" at: <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn125.pdf> and "*Wild Side of the Menu No. 3, Preservation of Game Meats and Fish*", at: <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn155.pdf>. Penn State Cooperative Extension offers, "*Proper Processing of Wild Game and Fish*" at: <http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/uk072.pdf>.

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Wild things *(Cont'd from cover page)*

Freezing may be the most common way to preserve game, although canning and drying are other options to consider. For information and directions on canning game, see University of Missouri Extension guide GH1490, "Quality for Keeps: Canning Meat, Fish and Poultry" <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/GH1490>.

To safely preserve meat, start by handling game properly. Dress and gut all game as soon as possible after shooting. Cool, clean and transport properly to avoid contaminating the meat with dirt and bacteria.

Freezing birds. Many hunters skin game birds or waterfowl to avoid the tedious task of plucking and removing pinfeathers. However, the meat may dry out more during cooking unless covered with strips of bacon. Remove excess fat on wild ducks

and geese as it becomes rancid very quickly.

To prevent the growth of harmful bacteria, do not stuff game birds or any poultry before freezing. Rather, stuff birds just before cooking. To freeze, package fowl in meal-size portions in moisture, vapor-proof wrap, seal, label with name of product and date. Freeze for up to 6 months.

Freezing venison. Deer carcasses should be cooled to 35° to 40°F as soon as possible. (please see the Penn State publication given on cover page for more information). Because the weather in Missouri may be too warm to cool the carcass quickly, it may be best to take the deer to a locker plant or processing facility to have them do this for you.

Unless it will be used for sausage, venison is best aged to help tenderize the meat and to

avoid any 'gamey' flavor that may develop. To age the meat, hang the carcass at temperatures of 40° F or less for no more than 2 to 3 days. Please see the Penn State publication for more information.

Before packaging venison for freezing, trim fat and cut into pieces that will be prepared for meals or other uses. Wrap meal-size portions in moisture, vapor-proof wrap, seal, label with name of product and date, and freeze as quickly as possible. Be sure not to overload the capacity of your freezer. Freeze only the amount of meat that will freeze within 24 hours, about 2 to 3 pounds for each cubic foot of freezer capacity.

Source: GH 1507 Quality for Keeps: Freezing Unusual Fruits and Vegetables. University of Missouri Extension.

Food preservation resources

Keep this list handy for information on the best techniques and recipes for safe, high-quality home preserved foods. To obtain home food preservation MU Extension guides, or to have your pressure canner dial gauge tested, contact your local county Extension Center.

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|---|---|
| MU Extension publications on all areas of home food preservation | http://extension.missouri.edu/publications search for "food preservation" |
| University of Georgia site. Publications, Q/A source, free online food preservation home-study course, DVD of food preservation processes | http://uga.edu/nchfp National Center for Home Food Preservation |
| U.S. Department of Agriculture Searchable database of farmers markets across Missouri | http://agebb.missouri.edu/fmktidir/ search for local farmers markets |
| Recommended references: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So Easy to Preserve, University of Georgia, 5th ed. • Ball Blue Book of Canning since 1989 • USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning, 2009 • Recipes from National Center for Home Food Preservation, USDA, Cooperative Extension, land grant universities |

Black-Walnut Chocolate Biscotti

- 2-1/2 cups flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoon grated fresh ginger root (peeled)
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup black walnuts (toasted lightly; skins removed as much as possible and chopped coarsely)*
- 1/4 cup almonds, toasted lightly and coarsely chopped

This recipe would make great gifts for the upcoming holiday season!

Procedure: This batter can be mixed in a large bowl by hand, but is much easier with a food processor or large electric mixer. Blend dry ingredients (flour through cocoa powder) until mixture is well combined. In a small bowl, whisk together: ginger root, vanilla and eggs; add to the dry ingredients, beating until a dough is formed. Stir nuts in by hand.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Turn dough out onto lightly floured surface and knead several times. Divide into thirds. Butter and flour baking sheet. With floured hands, form each piece of dough into a 10 X 2-1/2 inch log. Flatten lightly with hands. Arrange logs on baking sheet 4 inches apart.

Bake for 25 minutes. Let cool on baking sheet on a rack for 10 minutes. Remove logs from sheet and cut each crosswise on the diagonal into 3/4-inch thick slices. Arrange biscotti, cut sides down, on two baking sheets and bake for 5 minutes on each side. Transfer biscotti to racks to cool. Store in airtight containers. Will keep for two weeks.

****Note:** removing walnut skins: while the nuts are still hot from toasting, wrap them in a tea towel and rub them lightly against each other to remove as much skin as possible. Then proceed with chopping.

Optional Glaze:

Dress up biscotti by zigzagging chocolate down the lengths, or by dipping the ends in chocolate. Here's how: Melt 3 ounces of high-quality dark chocolate and 2 tablespoons unsalted butter together over low heat. Remove from heat and add 2 tablespoons corn syrup (and just a touch of your favorite liqueur, if desired). Stir well and fill a pastry bag fitted with a small round tip.

After biscottis have cooled, squeeze chocolate through the pastry bag's tip in thin ribbons down the length of the biscotti. Alternatively, dip ends in the warm chocolate and shake gently to remove excess. Dry thoroughly on racks before storing.

Source: Reprinted with permission from "Cooking wild in Missouri", by Bernadette Dryden, Missouri Department of Conservation, 2012.

Mailing perishable foods

Everyone loves getting packages in the mail. Whether giving or receiving, Follow these safety tips to keep these special gifts safe.

Tips for the Purchaser:

- Ask the company how the food will be mailed. If it is a perishable item, it should be delivered overnight. Label, "Keep Refrigerated" to alert the recipient.
- Will the food item come with storage and preparation instructions? Some consumers may not know how to handle or prepare food gifts.
- Tell the recipient if the company has promised a delivery date. Otherwise, it may sit unsafely on the front porch, or at the post office for hours or even days. Do not have perishable items delivered to an office, unless it

will arrive on a work day and there is refrigerator space available for keeping it cold.

Tips for the Receiver:

- When receiving a food item marked "keep refrigerated" open it immediately and check its temperature. The food should arrive frozen, or partially frozen, with ice crystals still visible, or at least, refrigerator cold to the touch. Even if a product is smoked, cured and/or fully cooked, if it says "keep refrigerated" it is a perishable product and must be kept cold. If perishable food arrives warm, above 40°F as measured with a food thermometer, notify the company. **Do not consume the food.** **Do not even taste suspect food.** **Remember that it is the shipper's responsibility to deliver perishable foods on time and**

the customer's responsibility to have someone at home to receive the package.

Refrigerate or freeze perishable items immediately.

Mail foods early in the week. Do not send food packages at the end of the week, this delays delivery and increases the risk of spoilage.

The best food gifts to mail are foods that do not need to be refrigerated, such as hard salami, hard cheese, country ham, cookies, brownies, fruitcake and fudge.

Sources: National Center for Home Food Preservation. (July 2003). Resources for Home Food Preservation Gifts. http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/tips/winter/hfp_gifts.html

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. (September 2006). Mail Order Food Safety. http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Mail_Order_Food_Safety/Index.asp#chart.

Quality for Keeps, published monthly, April through October, is made available to residents of East Central, Southeast 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:

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