



Milton Hershey School (MHS) Instructional Assistant Carol O'Donovan purchases plants from fifth-grade student Cory Shockey during the Mini-Society Outdoor Market.

## Students Conduct Outdoor Market

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — Milton Hershey School (MHS) elementary students took part in an annual end-of-the-school-year project, an outdoor market.

Each year, the fifth-graders develop businesses for a "mini-society" as a career educational experience. During a designated "shopping day," MHS staff act as consumers, using student-designed money to purchase goods and services provided by students at their businesses.

All businesses are product-based to provide students with an in-depth study of the start-to-finish process of producing and selling a product. All products, which include maple syrup, honey, butter, ice cream, herbs,

birdseed, and soap, were made with resources available at the School's Agricultural and Environmental Education (AEE) Land and Learning Use Centers. AEE staff guided students in their product-making activities.

In early stages of the 12-week project, students completed research to determine products that would be in demand, as well as how to make those products. For example, students making birdseed researched attractive birds indigenous to this region and their diet preferences. With the information, students were able to determine for themselves the best ingredients for their birdseed.



Milton Hershey School students explain their ag-related products to Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Sam Hayes before the opening of the Mini-Society Outdoor Market.

## Well Preserved

The Well Preserved news column is prepared by Lancaster County Cooperative Extension. It includes food preservation information and questions.

### Tips For Successful Freezing of Foods

July seems to burst forth with an abundance of produce from our gardens and local orchards needing to be preserved. Freezing foods requires less time and effort than canning, and some people prefer the resulting quality and texture.

Freezing is especially desirable when you have small quantities to freeze. Even food preservers who have only the freezer on top of the refrigerator can preserve a few pints of blueberries or packs of green beans from the garden. Whether you are freezing large quantities or small amounts, there are some basic guidelines to follow for best results: Maintain a freezing temperature of 0 degrees F. or lower. This is much colder than the freezing temperature of water and is needed to maintain the quality of frozen food.

Keep a freezer thermometer in the freezer to monitor the temperature. Freeze foods as soon as they are packaged. Add only 2 to 3 pounds of food per cubic foot of storage space so that the food will freeze within 24 hours. Overloading the freezer slows down the freezing rate which results in the loss of quality. Place food in contact with the freezer surface in the coldest part of the freezer.

Leave a little space between packages so that cold air can circulate between them. When the food is frozen, the packages can be placed closer together.

Label each package or container with the name of the product and packaging date. You may also need to include any added ingredients, the number of servings or amount and the form of the food such as whole, sliced, etc.

Unless you are using the individually quick freezing method, pack foods in quantities that will be used for a single meal. Cool all foods and syrups before packaging to speed up freezing. This also maintains the natural color, flavor and texture of the food.

Here are some questions that we have received at the extension office:

How much head space is needed for frozen foods? It depends upon the type of food, the container used, and the type of pack. Head space is needed to allow for the expansion of liquid when it is frozen. Inadequate headspace results in sugary liquid seeping out of the container onto other packages and onto the freezer surfaces. Fruits packed in juice, sugar, syrup or water, crushed or pureed fruit should have 1/2 inch headspace for pint containers and 1 inch head space for quart containers with a wide top opening.

Liquid pack fruits should have 1/4 inch head space in pint containers and 1 1/2 inch headspace in quart containers with a narrow top opening. The liquid nature of juice requires more headspace and you should allow 1 1/2 inches in a container with a narrow top opening. Fruits or vegetables packed without added sugar or liquid require only 1/2 inch headspace in either wide or narrow top containers. Foods that do not need head space include loose packing vegetables such as asparagus and broccoli. What effect does freezing have on spices and seasonings? Pepper, cloves, garlic, green pepper, imitation vanilla, and some herbs tend to get strong and bitter. Onion and paprika change flavor during freezing. Celery seasonings become stronger. Salt loses flavor and has the tendency to increase rancidity of any item containing fat. If it is necessary to season foods before freezing, season lightly and add additional seasoning when reheating or serving the food. Can all foods be frozen? No, some foods become limp, soft, and mushy when frozen. Foods that are traditionally eaten raw such as lettuce, celery, cress, cucumbers, endive, cabbage, parsley, and radishes become water logged and develop off colors, aromas, and flavors.

Cucumbers and cabbage can be frozen as marinated products but do not have the same texture as regular slaw or pickles. Baked or boiled potatoes tend to become soft, crumbly, mealy, and watery when frozen. Do you really need to blanch vegetables to freeze them? Most vegetables need to be blanched to stop the enzyme re-



actions that cause the ripening process. Blanching improves the color, flavor, and texture of the frozen food. Exceptions to blanching vegetables are chopped onions, green peppers, celery, and herbs.

Is it cost effective to buy a freezer? A freezer is usually more of a convenience than a saving. Make the best use of your freezer by keeping the freezer full, using and replacing the food, and using older food first. Can food be refrozen if it has thawed? Foods that still have some ice crystals in the package can be safely refrozen although the quality will be lower. Fruits survive thawing with the least damage to quality.

What causes freezer burn? Moisture loss in the form of ice crystals evaporating from the surface of the food produces a grainy grayish white or brownish spot. The tissues become dry and tough but are not harmful. Package food in heavy weight moisture proof wrap or vapor proof containers to prevent moisture loss.

Why do frozen peaches become brown? Enzymes in fruit cause browning as the fruit continues to ripen and Vitamin C is lost. Browning can be controlled by adding ascorbic acid.

How can I freeze green beans so that they don't clump together? Try freezing them in a single layer on a tray. Freeze them only until they are frozen through and immediately place into vapor proof freezer bags or containers. This works well for many fruits and vegetables. Called individually quick freezing, this method allows you to remove the portion you want at any given time.

If you have food preservation questions, a home economist is available to answer questions on Wednesdays 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., call (717) 394-6851 or write Penn State Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County, 1383 Arcadia Rd., Rm.1, Lancaster, PA, 17601.

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## Free Farm Market Guide For Montgomery County

COLLEGEVILLE (Chester Co.) — Warmer weather means fresh, locally-grown produce is becoming available, and Montgomery County Cooperative Extension offers a free "Farm Market Guide."

Forty-eight Montgomery County farms and farmers' markets are listed in the publication. A description of available items, location, and business hours for each market are given. There is also a helpful

chart for consumers to show which months are best for obtaining specific fruits or vegetables.

For a free copy, contact the Cooperative Extension office at (610) 489-4315.

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