

Well Preserved

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

Featuring Cupboard Storage

If you know how to store food properly and how long it will keep, you will waste fewer food dollars while keeping food looking and tasting good. Proper storage will also help retain nutrients and keep the food safe to eat.

Store foods in your coolest cabinets away from appliances which produce heat. Put dishes or pans—not food—in the cabinets over the range, near the dishwasher or by the refrigerator exhaust. The temperature is too warm for food in those places. Foods in glass jars should be kept in a dark place to avoid the loss of vitamins that are sensitive to light.

Bread keeps fresh if stored at room temperature in a cool, dry place. Refrigeration hastens staling.

However, in hot humid weather, bread kept for more than two or three days should be refrigerated to retard mold growth. Store brown-and-serve breads, English muffins, and other high-moisture breads in the refrigerator. Keep hard-



crust breads such as French bread at room temperature and use within one or two days of purchase. Hard-crust breads are made with water rather than milk and dry quickly.

Most breads are packaged in moisture and vapor-proof wraps (polyethylene bags), which are good for storage. When other containers are used to store bread, they should be rinsed with a baking soda solution after cleaning to remove odors that might be absorbed by the containers.

Store flour in an airtight container. Flour takes up moisture and also dries out easily. If you buy a large bag of flour, leave it in the bag and store it in a large covered container. In hot humid weather, buy flour in small amounts and keep it in the refrigerator or freezer. Flour stored in a warm place is likely to attract insects. Whole wheat flour should be stored in the re-

frigerator year round. Natural oils in whole wheat flour cause it to turn rancid quickly at room temperature. Flour absorbs odors and should not be stored near soap powders, medicines, or other items with strong odors. Brown sugar is a frustration when it is too hard to measure out. One remedy for hard brown sugar is to spread it out as best you can on a cookie sheet and heat in a slow oven (250F to 300F) until softened.

Then remove the sugar from the oven and measure it while still warm; it will harden again when cooled. To keep brown sugar soft, put it in a plastic bag, tight fitting plastic container, or in a jar with a tight lid.

Slipping an apple slice or piece of bread in with the brown sugar will keep it soft. Check it occasionally to see that the apple or bread has not dried out or become moldy.

A few fruits and vegetables are suitable for cupboard storage. Dry onions, potatoes, rutabagas, and winter squash usually keep best in cool dark places around 50F to 60F. Onions and white potatoes will sprout in the spring; so during the spring, only buy what you can use in a week. Don't store potatoes and onions together because the moisture from the potatoes will cause the onions to spoil.

Do not refrigerate sweet potatoes. Temperatures below 50F cause starch changes in sweet potatoes which alter their flavor.

While some fruits and vegetables may start out at room temperature, longer term storage needs to be in the refrigerator. Ripen tomatoes at room temperature out of direct sunlight. When ripe, store tomatoes in the refrigerator.

Ripen bananas at room temperature to desired maturity. Ripened bananas may be refrigerated for two to three days to prevent further ripening.

Store apples in a cool place (below 60F) during the fall following harvest. After this time, apples deteriorate rapidly and should be kept in the refrigerator. Ripen firm avocados and cantaloupe at room temperature. Allow three to five days for avocados; two to four days for cantaloupe.

What can you do with those crackers, cereals, or snacks that get stale? Spread them onto a cookie sheet and place them in a 425F oven for a few minutes. They will be crisp and ready to use again provided they have no off-flavors.

While canned goods have a long shelf life, they don't maintain their quality for ever. Rotate canned goods and try not to keep canned foods more than one year. Canned fruit juices should be used within nine months. The shelf life of canned goods will be shortened when they are stored above 70F. Old canned goods may be safe to eat, but their color, flavor, texture, and/or nutritive value may have deteriorated. Store canned

foods in a dry place at moderately cool, but not freezing temperatures.

Canned goods that become frozen may experience a slight breakdown of texture, but a single freezing and thawing is not serious unless the seal is broken.

Danger signs for canned foods involve bulging, denting, or rusting of cans. Bulging indicates spoilage inside the can—throw it away without opening the can or tasting the food. Do not buy cans with dents on the side seam or on the top or bottom rim. Check carefully for leakage—especially around the seam.

Throw leaky cans away. Also check rusty cans for leakage as the rust may have penetrated the can.

When you buy staples and canned goods, date food packages and use the oldest first. Buy fresh-looking packages. Dusty cans or torn labels may indicate old stock.

"Spotlight on Cupboard Storage," a publication that includes a listing of the shelf life of common foods, is available on line at www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/Pubs/CFS/CFS-423-W.pdf or you may request a copy by contacting Penn State Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County, 1383 Arcadia Road, Rm.1, Lancaster, PA 17601 or call (717) 394-6851 on Wednesdays 10 a.m.—1 p.m. and ask for the food preservation home economist.

4-H Offering Embryology, Food Production Education Program

SPRINGFIELD (Delaware Co.) — Embryology and Food PEP (Production Education Program) are two of the programs being offered by Delaware County 4-H for homeschoolers and other interested groups. Both programs meet numerous Pennsylvania academic standards.

For embryology, the chick-hatching program, participants learn about why and what is happening as an embryo develops. They also learn avian (bird) anat-

omy, developmental processes and stages of growth, scientific processes, and hands-on experience with living creatures, including caring for and respecting their value.

4-H provides fertile chicken eggs that are hatched in incubators. Each household or group receives eggs, student books, and teacher materials for a complete chick hatching experience.

The cost of all materials plus the rental of an incubator is \$40.

If you own an incubator, the cost is \$25. 4-H also has incubators for purchase for \$65.

The following two sessions in Embryology are available: Nov. 7-22 and Nov. 26-Dec. 13.

Food PEP (Production Education Program) is also being offered, which explores plant and animal agriculture. Newly revised student books contain farm history, vocabulary, and related activities. Included is a nutrition section including the food guide

pyramid, grains and produce, as well as sections on all the animals found on the 4-H farm: cattle, swine, poultry, and sheep.

A video is included with the program that costs \$25 per household or group. An optional related spring field trip is available to the 4-H farm in Newtown Square.

Call Susan Baraldi at (610) 690-7663 for information. Leave your address for registration materials to be sent to you.

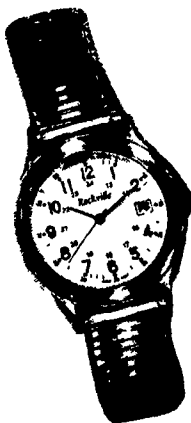


New 4-H Spinning Club In Montgomery County
Have an interest in learning how to spin yarn from wool? A new 4-H group is forming in Montgomery County to teach interested persons this age-old art. The group is open to both adults and 4-H age youth (ages 8-19). On Sunday, Nov. 24, the group will carpool to Handweavers of Bucks County Show and Sale at Washington's Crossing State

Park from 1:30 to 4 p.m. A holiday party is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 29, from 2 to 4 p.m.

The spinning group is open to both adults and 4-H age youth. To participate, contact the Montgomery County Cooperative Extension office in Collegeville at (610) 489-4315.

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