

Well Preserved

Preserving Food Without Salt

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

One of the advantages of home food preservation is the ability to prepare foods to meet special dietary needs. Many commercially prepared foods are extremely high in sodium content.

While salt in the form of sodium chloride is the most readily identified source of sodium, sodium comes from a variety of other sources. Read the ingredient labels on commercially processed foods and you will find some of

these hidden sources of sodium such as monosodium glutamate, sodium nitrate, sodium benzoate, disodiumphosphate, to name just a few.

By canning and freezing your own foods, you may be able to reduce some of these sodium levels.

Most foods can be safely frozen or canned without the addition of salt. Salt is a flavoring and not a preservative except for brined pickles and sauerkraut. Commercial salt substitutes generally are not recommended in canning but can be added prior to serving. They may contain additives that will react with the foods, impart off-flavors or colors, or give brines a cloudy appearance.



The flavor of salt-free vegetables can be improved with other seasonings. Try adding 1/2 to 1 tablespoon of lemon or orange juice to each pint of carrots, beets, or asparagus.

Green beans and peas get a lift from 1/4 teaspoon mace, nutmeg or curry powder per pint. Whole kernel corn is good canned with a few strips of red pepper and 1/2 teaspoon basil per pint.

Other flavorings substitutes could be black pepper, curry powder, cumin, dill, ginger, coriander, garlic or onion. Use the powdered form of onion or garlic instead of the salt form.

Spices and herbs tend to get strong and bitter when frozen. Season lightly before freezing and then add more seasonings when reheating and serving.

Salt is needed in brined pickles, sauerkraut, and

cured and smoked foods because it plays a role in the safe preservation of these foods. Fermented pickles and sauerkraut are made by soaking cucumbers or cabbage in a salt-water brine for at least three weeks. The salt in the brine controls the growth of microorganisms. Too little salt causes undesirable organisms to grow and spoilage results. Too much salt kills the lactic acid bacteria needed to give the fermented pickles and sauerkraut their characteristic flavor as well as preserving them.

Never cut down or eliminate salt in these fermented products. Some sodium reduction can be achieved by rinsing sauerkraut with water before serving it. Avoid salt substitutes in these products because their use in such large amounts can be harmful.

Salt can be eliminated or reduced in fresh-pack pickles. The safety of these pickles depends upon the proportion of vinegar in the product. No-salt pickles should contain at least one part vinegar to one part water and each pint jar of pickles should have at least 1/4 cup of vinegar.

Salt-free pickles need extra seasoning to compensate for the missing salt. Peppery-hot, sweet, and sweet-sour pickles taste better as low-salt pickles than do plain salt-free pickles.

If salt is omitted from fresh-pack dill pickles, enhance the flavor with peppers, herbs and garlic instead. Another option might be to add just a small amount of salt to improve the taste. Most commercial salt substitutes are not effective in creating fresh pack pickles with an acceptable taste.

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.

Oldest Craft Guild Expands

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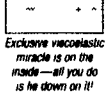
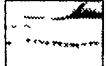
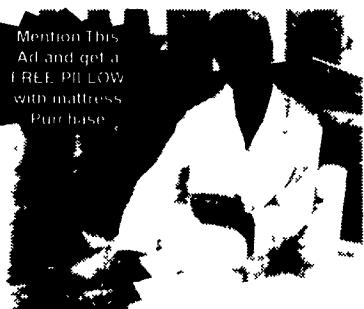
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