

## Safe Preserving

As summer progresses, our gardens and local farms and farm markets begin to overflow with a bountiful harvest. Be sure to enjoy the freshness but remember you can extend the availability of fruits and veggies by preserving through freezing, canning or drying. Each method of preserving may be better suited to certain types of foods. The following tips will help you preserve your foods safely. Start with a clean kitchen, clean equipment and clean hands.

### Quick Freezing Tips

- Use only good quality freshly picked produce.
- Wash thoroughly to remove soil or contamination and inedible parts.
- Cut to size.
- Freezing vegetables requires a blanching step (placing the produce in boiling water) check cook book for required blanching times.
- Once blanched, quickly cool the produce by placing in an ice water bath to stop the cooking process.
- Drain and package in clean, air tight food grade containers or bags, label and date. Place in freezer at -18°C and use within one year.

### Quick Canning Tips

- Wash and prepare the produce.
- Clean and sanitize canning jars and lids, check for cracks or chips in the glass.
- Use only tested recipes and do not substitute or reduce ingredients.
- Fill jars and leave the proper amount of head space (space between food and the top of the jar).
- Process foods according to the recipe. This step is critical to reduce the risk of botulism.
- High acid foods require processing using a boiling water bath/canner.
- Low acid foods are much more risky and require a higher level of processing using a pressure canner and following directions exactly.
- Label and store in a cool dark place, use within one year.

### Quick Drying Tips

- Wash produce to remove dirt and contamination.
- Choose a drying method i.e. dehydrator, oven drying, air drying.
- Prepare the produce and place in thin, single layers on drying racks.
- Protect the food from dust etc during the drying process.
- Air drying during humid days may result in mould developing which makes air drying a challenge.
- Once dried ensure food is cool and then package in clean, dry food grade containers or bags.
- Label and date.