



NORTH CENTRAL REGION FOOD SAFETY



THE ISSUE

Home food preservation education has been implemented through the Extension system for more than 100 years. Extension uses research-tested recipes and information to convey safe food practices. Following United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved home food preservation practices, including canning, freezing and drying, can help ensure safe, high-quality preserved foods. Consumers who use untested or outdated home food preservation techniques or recipes put the health of families at risk.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION EXTENSION ACTION

A multistate team created survey tools that were used to evaluate home food preservation programs covering a variety of topics and delivered in different formats. Five North Central Region states (Indiana, Kansas Michigan, Missouri and North Dakota) participated in the initial year of this effort. In 2017, a total of 1,620 participants enrolled in home food preservation classes that used the common survey tool.

Topics covered at the workshops included boiling-water canning (28 percent of respondents); pressure canning (17 percent); jams, jellies and sweet spreads (13 percent); pickling (11 percent); and numerous other topics. Most (89 percent) of the workshops were 1-3 hours in length, with some (7 percent) more than 3 hours and 5 percent less than 1 hour. Many respondents (30 percent) have been preserving food at home for more than 10 years, while 27 percent have been preserving food for less than one year.

THE IMPACT

Home food preservation workshops are effective group-setting programs for participants to achieve significant knowledge gain in safe food handling and preservation techniques. Almost all (96 percent) workshop participants reported that they learned information in the program that was new to them. Most participants significantly increased their confidence in food preservation abilities, their understanding of the importance of following research-tested recipes, and their ability to identify and share with others trustworthy sources of information.

According to a subset of respondents (n=201) in a 3- to 6-month post-workshop follow-up online survey, 67 percent had changed their food preservation practices, 93.5 percent indicated they always practice safe home food preservation practices, 94.5 percent had shared Extension resources and 96 percent indicated greater confidence in their ability to preserve food safely.

This project showed successful use of common survey tools across several states, using a post-then-pre evaluation method. This research protocol and survey tool allowed the regional team to show the impact of a variety of Extension food preservation programs across several states.

See www.ag.ndsu.edu/ncrfoodsafety for more information.

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