Kids can learn a lot when growing, preparing and preserving food. In this issue, we will explore basic food preservation and fun garnishes to make with your family.

Eat

Many fruits and vegetables are in season, so they are at their best quality and, often, best price. Try preserving any extra with a little help from a child.

Drying food is one of the easiest food preservation methods. The following fruits were rated as “excellent” or “good” by the University of Georgia for preparing fruit leather: apples, apricots, berries, cherries, nectarines, peaches, pears, pineapple, plums and strawberries. Other fruits (blueberries, cranberries) in combination can provide a good end product, too.

Connect

Garden Garnishes

- Children learn best by doing, playing and being engaged in the experience.
- We all can use a little whimsy, no matter what our age.
- Some garden veggies and homegrown fruit just ask to be the center of attention!

Why not combine all three and make garnishes from fresh produce with your kids?

If your family members like to create on their own, check your garden, the orchard or the farmers market and decide what you can make by what the fruits and vegetables look like to you. If you need more inspiration, check the library, cookbooks or the internet. Here is a fun page to get you started: https://goo.gl/pcW2p7.

Keep your food designs simple so everyone can take part and feel successful. Toothpicks make the job easier, but they are not safe hidden in food, so refrain from using elements you can’t eat.

Making garden garnishes is a great way to help kids get comfortable with fruits and vegetables while being creative and sharing time around the family table.
**Video:** How to Make Fruit Leather

This short video shows you how to make raspberry fruit leather:
https://tinyurl.com/NDSUfruitleather

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**Homemade Fruit Leather Instructions**

- Select ripe or slightly overripe fruit. Thoroughly rinse soft-skinned fruits or scrub hard-skinned fruits under running water. Remove blemishes or defective parts, then peel apples, oranges, peaches, pears and similar fruits before pureeing. Remove seeds, pits and cores.

- Cut fruit into chunks and place them in the top of a double boiler. Place water in the bottom of the double boiler and bring it to a boil. Cover and steam the fruit for 15 or 20 minutes or until it is soft and a thermometer placed in the fruit mixture registers 160 F.

- Place the cooked fruit in a blender. Add ½ teaspoon of ascorbic acid crystals or 2 tablespoons of lemon juice per 2 cups of fruit. If desired, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of honey, corn syrup or sugar per 2 cups of fruit. You also may add a small amount of spice (¼ teaspoon of cinnamon or a dash of nutmeg) per 2 cups of puree.

- Spray a cookie sheet or similar flat tray with vegetable spray, or line the tray with plastic wrap or parchment paper and spray with vegetable spray. Another option is to use the specially designed plastic sheets for electric dehydrators and follow the manufacturer’s directions.

- Be sure the tray has edges so the puree will not spill, and be sure the dimensions of the trays are about 2 inches smaller than the dimensions of the oven to allow for good air circulation.

- Spread puree evenly onto the drying tray about ⅛ to ¼ inch thick. A 12- by 17-inch cookie sheet holds about 2 cups of puree. Fruit leather may be dried in an oven or food dehydrator. Follow the manufacturer’s directions for drying details. See www.ag.ndsu.edu/food/food-preservation and click on “Dry” to view the NDSU Extension publication, “Making Fruit Leathers.”

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**Savor (the Savings)**

Enjoy and Preserve Your Harvest

This time of year, you finally are getting to enjoy the fresh produce from your garden. Growing your own produce can save you money.

However, your garden may produce more than you can eat before it spoils. If you are just throwing food out, you’re not really saving money. Using a food preservation method such as the ones listed below can help extend the life of your food.

Canning is the most expensive form of food preservation. Buying a jar of jelly/jam from the grocery store might be cheaper than making your own. If you can, you will need jars, lids and a canner (water bath or pressure, depending on what you are canning), and the costs can add up quickly. However, the amount of joy you may get from canning food items as a family is priceless.

Two inexpensive methods of preserving food from your garden are drying and freezing. If you don’t have a food dehydrator, you can use your oven. If you decide to freeze your foods, you just will need freezer storage bags or containers.

For more information on how to preserve your harvest and what equipment you will need, visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/food/food-preservation, NDSU Extension’s food preservation website.