

District Resource Management Grant Report 2009
“Stretch your food dollar by preserving in season” – Door County
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Situation:

With rising food and oil prices and a faltering economy, consumers are looking for ways to make their food dollar stretch further and support their own local economy. One way this concern can be addressed is by preserving foods one grows or can purchase very cheaply when in foods are plentiful in season. After receiving many seasonal questions regarding canning, it was obvious that many in our community did not have a sound understanding of how to can safely.

Response:

During July of 2009, UW-Extension WNEP Coordinator and Family Living Educator and key agency partners participated in a multi-day training to become Master Food Preservers. A community garden plot at the Peninsular Agriculture Research Station was used for growing produce for the classes which included: tomatoes, cucumbers and green beans. Apples were donated from local growers, including the Peninsular Agriculture Research Station. This produce led to four canning class topics (green beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, and applesauce) which were offered to community members. The classes were promoted through local newspapers (see attached), flyers, Head Start family newsletters, Door County Community Programs clients and class participants. Participants who took a class promoted the classes through their personal networks, this effort alone was the most advantageous and prompted us to offer additional class sessions, yet we still needed to turn interested parties away due to capacity issues. Classes were conducted at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. Thirteen canning classes were conducted for community members, four of which were specifically targeted for those with disabilities. Three lunch & learn training classes (green beans, cucumbers, tomatoes) were offered to Door County Government Center Staff. Three classes pertaining to the drying of seasonal foods were also conducted with Head Start families and adults and teenagers with disabilities.

Results/Evidence:

One hundred and sixty participants took part in the canning classes or lunch & learns. Our main goal of the canning classes was to assure that those taking the classes were aware of the recommended safety precautions to can safely. One of the ways canners can can safely is to follow a tested recipe and know canning basics. Of those participants who participated in the tomato canning class, 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with “I understand the reasons to follow a tested recipe for canning.” Prior to the workshop 55% agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. After completing the class, 91% were more confident in their ability to process tomato products safely. (*see attached Tomatoes Tart & Tasty evaluation*)

Identified actions participants would take as a result of the workshop:

“Wow, canning is done a lot differently now than 40 years ago! I will use most of the recipes from our class this year in canning.”

“I learned how to use an apple peeler, corer, slicer – this will save me hours of work in the canning process.”

“Add citric acid to tomatoes. Make sure to process for the full time.”