

Cooperative Extension

Promoting Healthy Families, Schools and Communities

Savor the Flavor of Herbs Year ‘Round

Daryl Minch, M.Ed., FCHS Educator, Somerset County

Are you growing herbs at home? Do you get more herbs than you can use in your CSA share? Have you ever thrown out wilted herbs? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then you’ll be happy to know that storing and preserving herbs for another day or year is easy.

Many herbs have a short life after harvest. Herbs may wilt, get slimy, turn black or moldy unless stored correctly. Follow these directions to protect the flavor and prolong the usability of herbs.

Harvest for flavor

Harvest herbs early in the morning for best flavor and ideally pick only as much as you need for the dish or day. Herbs often lose flavor as they flower, so harvest often to prevent flowering or remove flower heads on herbs such as basil and thyme. However, flowers of some herbs are also used for flavoring or garnish such as chives.

Short term storage – a few days to a week

- ✓ Most herbs keep in the refrigerator for a few days to a week. Roll a single layer of herbs in a damp paper towel and place in an open or perforated plastic bag. You can make your own perforated plastic bag by cutting holes in each side of the bag every few inches. This method works well for chives, dill, mint, parsley, rosemary, sage, tarragon, and thyme.
- ✓ **Cilantro** – put stems in a cup of water and loosely place a plastic bag over the top. Store in the refrigerator.
- ✓ **Basil** - store in a cup of water at room temperature. Basil turns black when exposed to cold, so do not refrigerate. Parsley and sage will also keep this way

Long Term Storage

Store herbs for weeks to a year by freezing or drying. Harvest and remove any bruised or bad parts or tough stems. Rinse under running water and dry in a salad spinner or by wrapping in a clean towel or paper towels. Follow the directions below.

Freezing

- ✓ Freeze whole or chopped herbs in water, broth or “vegetable” oil such as olive or canola. The oil will



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Summer Safe Grilling Tips

Karen Ensle Ed.D., RDN, FAND, CFCS, FCHS Educator, Union County



Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.

Always marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter or outdoors. Boil used marinade before applying to cooked food or reserve a portion of the unused marinade to use as a sauce.

When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 or 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash. If you partially cook food in the microwave, oven or stove to reduce grilling time, do so immediately before the food goes on the hot grill.

Use a Food Thermometer: Grilling is a great way to cook healthy food. Just make sure that a food thermometer is used so you are guaranteed that the food will be cooked to the proper temperature. The best types of food thermometers for grilling include:



✓ **Digital Instant-Read Thermometer** which reads the temperature in ten seconds.

Make sure to place it at least ½ inch deep into the food, as it allows measuring internal temperature in thick and thin foods

✓ **Thermometer-Fork Combination** reads in 2-10 seconds. Place at least ¼ inch deep in the thickest part of the food, making sure the sensor in the tine of the fork, is fully inserted into the food. This type can be used in most foods and is convenient for grilling.



The food thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the meat and should not be touching bone, fat, or gristle. Check the temperature in several places to make sure the food is evenly heated.

✓ **Beef, veal and lamb steaks and roasts:** 145 °F for medium rare and 160 °F for medium.

✓ **Ground pork and ground beef:** 160 °F.

✓ **Poultry:** to at least 165 °F.

✓ **Fin fish:** 145 °F or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork. Shrimp, lobster and crabs: the meat should be pearly and opaque. Clams, oysters and mussels: until the shells are open.

For safety and to prevent overcooking, check the internal temperature of the food being grilled in several places toward the end of the cooking time, before the food is expected to be finished cooking. Clean your food thermometer with hot water and soap detergent before and after each use.

Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs. Be sure to have plenty of clean utensils and platters on hand. Grilled food can be kept hot until serving by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals to avoid overcooking.

Never let raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food or cut fresh fruits or vegetables sit at room temperature for more than two hours before putting them in the refrigerator or freezer (one hour when the temperature is above 90 °F).

Remember, taking these small steps when grilling will help you and your family to be safe grill masters. For more information on grilling see <http://www.fightbac.org/grill-master/> and the RCE Fact Sheet: "Grilling with Care" <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1089/>

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The Buzz on Intermittent Fasting

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We all follow or practice different eating patterns based on work schedules, preferences and personal reasons that dictate our eating agenda. The consumption of three meals a day with a few light snacks in-between meals, is usually the typical diet that may be familiar. A popular eating pattern known as intermittent fasting is generating much curiosity and even confusion for consumers. Intermittent fasting restricts energy intake for long periods of time. It can be defined differently from person to person and the number of days along with hours of fasting between meals can change. Intermittent fasting which is a form of caloric restriction, may aid weight loss, but is it healthy eating and is it sustainable?

Complete Alternate Day Fasting	These regimens involve alternating fasting days (no energy-containing foods or beverages consumed) with eating days (foods and beverages consumed Ad libitum).
Modified Fasting Regimens	Modified regimens allow for the consumption of 20–25% of energy needs on scheduled fasting days. This regimen is the basis for the popular 5:2 diet, which involves severe energy restriction for 2 non-consecutive days a week and eating all foods the other 5 days.
Time-Restricted Feeding	These protocols allow individuals to consume any energy intake within specific windows, which includes fasting periods on a routine basis. Studies of less than 3 meals/ day are indirect examinations of daily or nightly fasting periods.
Religious Fasting	A wide variety of fasting regimens for religious or spiritual purposes.
Ramadan Fasting	A fast from dawn to sunset during the holy months of Ramadan. The most common dietary practice is to consume one large meal after sunset and one lighter meal before dawn. The feast and fast periods of Ramadan are approximately 12 hours in length.
Other Religious Fasts	Latter Day Saints followers routinely abstain from food and drink for extended periods of time. Some Seventh-Day Adventists consume their last of 2 daily meals in the afternoon, resulting in an extended nighttime fasting interval that may be biologically important.

Table 1. Adapted from *Types of Intermittent Fasting* retrieved from Patterson et al (2015)



According to Ruth Paterson and colleagues, intermittent fasting puts cells under mild stress and this form of stress may help resist disease. Unfortunately, most research trials only include animals while there are limited human studies. Some human trials have observed positive metabolic changes in individuals who engage in some form of intermittent fasting (ie improved fasting glucose levels, reduced triglycerides). Immediate weight loss is a short term benefit of intermittent fasting as well. Other positive improvements seen from research include a reduction in oxidative stress and preserved memory function.

Ultimately, more research is needed with human subjects to investigate the health benefits and short and long term effects of intermittent fasting. Professional organizations like the Mayo Clinic state that “there’s simply not enough research (yet) to support or debunk this trend, and shortening a person’s eating window, may make it difficult to get the vitamins and minerals one needs. Intermittent fasting may also be dangerous for people who are taking insulin, are on medications that require food, those who are actively growing (teens) and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Since intermittent fasting can be difficult to sustain, it is suggested to instead consume a healthy, balanced diet with moderate physical activity each week to support a healthy BMI and overall health status. With the new edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans being published in 2020, hopefully the USDA and DHHS will shed light on this controversial diet pattern and discuss the benefits (if any) of intermittent fasting for population groups.

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FCHS Brings Nutrition Education to Limited-Resource Clientele via SNAP-Ed Grant

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education, known as SNAP-Ed, is a program that teaches consumers how to plan meals, shop smart, cook healthier meal options, and save money on groceries. Directly related to SNAP, formerly called Food Stamps, SNAP-Ed teaches SNAP recipients how to use their benefits to the maximum potential. By delivering positive messages concerning nutrition and physical activity, SNAP-Ed creates great opportunities to broaden knowledge about health and wellness in daily life. Why is SNAP-Ed important? SNAP-Ed plays an important role, providing nutrition education that can lead to healthier food and life choices that can improve food security and work towards preventing obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases.



FCHS Program Coordinator Brian Quilty presents a nutrition and physical activity lesson from "Just Say Yes" to senior citizens in Gloucester County

There is a considerable amount of history that goes along with the evolution and the building of the SNAP program. The Food Stamp Program was first established in 1939 and operated until 1943. The program ended in the spring of 1943 when, "the conditions that brought the program into being – unmarketable food surpluses and widespread unemployment – no longer existed."

The 18 years between the end of the first Food Stamp Program and the inception of the next were filled with studies, reports, and legislative proposals. (USDA FNS.) A pilot food stamp program (FSP) was introduced on February 2nd, 1961. The purpose of this pilot program was to expand food distribution and increase the consumption of perishables. The pilot program had 380,000 participants spread out over 22 states. The Food Stamp Act of 1964 was established to make the FSP permanent, giving it structure and regulations, such as assuring that it is a non-discriminatory program, and providing a basis for eligibility. Since 1964, the FSP has experienced a number of changes and expansions. One noteworthy change was the Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) program. Approved in 1992, FSNE was an optional program that linked nutrition and a healthy diet to food security. This program has advanced immensely since its inception. Currently, all states participate in this supplemental nutrition education program that offers SNAP-eligible adults and children nutrition education, and uses policy, system, and environmental change strategies to promote healthy eating and physical activity. Policy, systems and environmental (PSE) change is a way of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members. By changing policies, systems and/or environments, communities can help tackle health issues like obesity, diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases. PSE change can be implemented within schools, for example, by incorporating walk-to-school programs or by making recess more active. PSE changes can also be implemented throughout the community, by working with a local corner store to help them stock and sell healthier foods, or by working with municipalities to create safe walking paths. With SNAP-Ed, the Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS), faculty and staff work with children and adults, teaching them how to cook healthier meals, become more active, and shop smarter on a budget – to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

SNAP-Ed is grant-funded by the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. In New Jersey, FCHS, a part of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, is pleased to be one of three partners offering nutrition and physical activity education as part of New Jersey's SNAP-Ed program.

As a SNAP-Ed partner, FCHS faculty and staff work with community-based agencies and schools in Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer Counties to provide education aimed at reducing hunger and preventing obesity. They provide classes and programs that offer practical information on nutrition, cooking, food safety, and physical activity to address the needs of audiences at every stage of life.

References

U.S Department of Agriculture. "Snap-Ed Connection." SNAP-Ed Connection, snaped.fns.usda.gov/.

USDA. "A Short History of SNAP." Food and Nutrition Service, 2018, www.fns.usda.gov/snap/short-history-snap

For more information about SNAP-Ed programming,

or to bring SNAP-Ed classes to your agency or school, please contact our Region 2 office at 856-224-8034. A member of our SNAP-Ed team will be in touch shortly. For programs outside of Region 2, contact:

- **Zufall Health:** Outreach in Hunterdon, Morris, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren Counties. **Contact: Jennifer Salt, Program Director at jsalt@zufallhealth.org or 973-891-3421.**
- **Community Food Bank of New Jersey:** Outreach in Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Passaic, Salem, and Union Counties. **Contact: snaped@cfbnj.org or 908-355-3663 ext. 526.**

Tidying Up Your Financial Life

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THERE IS
BEAUTY IN
SIMPLICITY

Several recent articles have noted an upsurge in thrift shop donations in the wake of the popular Netflix “tidying up” show hosted by Japanese organization consultant Marie Kondo. The same principles of sorting, organizing, and simplifying can also be applied to personal finances. Below are 15 ways to “tidy up” your financial life.



- ➔ **Create a Financial Inventory** - List key financial data in one document including bank and brokerage accounts, insurance policies, credit card numbers, names of financial advisors, and the location of important documents.
- ➔ **Consolidate Financial Accounts** - Prepare a net worth statement (assets minus debts). Identify assets to be consolidated. The objective is to consolidate similar assets (e.g., IRAs) to a minimum number of custodians.
- ➔ **Close Financial Accounts** - Eliminate and replace accounts that charge high fees (e.g., mutual funds with 12(b)(1) fees) and/or do not offer high interest rates. Compare at least three competing account providers.
- ➔ **Review and Update Beneficiary Designations** - Identify financial assets that have a beneficiary designation. List them all in one place on this worksheet. Review your beneficiary designations and revise them as needed.
- ➔ **Review Automated Payments** - Review recurring payments that are automatically deducted from financial accounts and cancel those for products and services that are no longer used (e.g., gym memberships).
- ➔ **Purge and Shred Documents** - Save year-end statements for financial accounts (e.g., mutual funds) and shred those that came before. Do the same for credit cards that provide an annual summary report.
- ➔ **Open Mail Immediately and Act on It Once** - Sort personal finance mail into three categories: 1. discard, 2. pay soon or immediately, and 3. file for long-term reference. Avoid making piles that require “revisiting” later.
- ➔ **Actively Solicit Price Quotes** - Contact your insurance agent(s) and inquire about money-saving discounts on new or existing policies. Do the same with current or potential utility providers. (e.g., cell phone plan).
- ➔ **Automate Recurring Financial Transactions** - Put savings deposits, bill payments, checking to savings account transfers, and regular mutual fund deposits on “automatic pilot” if you have a steady income.
- ➔ **Document Your Digital Assets** - Make a list of all the usernames, passwords, PINs, and other details related to your digital life. Make sure that trusted individuals can access your digital inventory information, if needed.
- ➔ **Check Your Credit Reports** - Request a free credit report every four months from one of the “Big Three” credit reporting agencies. Review written or online reports carefully for errors and evidence of identity theft.
- ➔ **Prepare or Review Estate Planning Documents** - Review your estate planning documents (e.g., will, living will) to make sure they still reflect your wishes and that people named in them are willing and able to serve.
- ➔ **Check for Available or Expiring Rewards** - Review recent credit card rewards statements for dollars available to spend. Ditto for accumulated gift cards that charge inactivity fees and airline miles that are about to expire.
- ➔ **Prepare a Home Inventory** - Use a camera or video to document what you own and store the files off site or in the cloud. Also, prepare a home inventory and store it digitally with scanned receipts for major purchases.
- ➔ **Organize a Home Financial Center** - Designate one place in your home to store all of your financial records and to do routine financial tasks such as bill-paying and reconciling your checking account balance.

The above list may look overwhelming. Start with one “tidiness” task, complete it, and then move on to another. Many people report a great sense of peace and satisfaction when they reduce the financial clutter in their lives.

partially solidify in the freezer and return to its liquid state when it comes to room temperature.

- ✓ Freeze herbs in recipe size amounts, such as a teaspoon or tablespoon of an herb.
- ✓ Freeze in ice cube trays or small containers; then pop out and store in freezer bags or containers. Label and date.
- ✓ Pesto freezes well but will be darker in color. Freeze in ice cube trays or recipe size amounts such as a ¼ cup.
- ✓ Freezing may cause darkening of some herbs, like basil. Color change generally does not affect flavor.
- ✓ Use within 6 months for best flavor.

Silicone molds or ice trays:

Freezing strong flavored herbs, garlic or pesto in silicone molds for more than a couple of days sometimes results in the silicone mold absorbing that odor. It may be difficult to remove the smell. Unless you want your ice cubes to taste like herbs, it is best to transfer these strong herbs or garlic immediately after freezing to a plastic freezer bag. Otherwise dedicate the silicone mold to these foods.

Drying Methods

Herbs should be very dry so they don't turn moldy. Several methods will achieve this result.

- **Air dry** in a hot, dry place such as attic, garage or shed. Humidity will slow or prevent drying.
 - ▶ Secure stems together with string or a rubber band.
 - ▶ Prepare a paper bag with holes punched or cut into the sides, but not the bottom.
 - ▶ Place the leafy or seed end of the bundle down in the bag and secure the top of the bag around the stems. This will keep out dust and bugs and catch seeds or leaves as they dry and possibly fall off. If you skip the bag, you may have leaves on the floor.
 - ▶ Hang by the stem end.
 - ▶ Drying time varies. Check the herbs after a week and again every few days until dry.
 - ▶ Remove the desired parts – leaves or seeds – and discard the stems. Package as below.
- **Oven:** Dry in a pre-heated hot oven (about 400° F) on a tray with sides. Once oven is at temperature, turn it off and use residual heat to dry the herbs. Check herbs once oven cools. Repeat as needed until herbs are dry.
- **Microwave oven:** Be careful. **Herbs can ignite if heated too long!** Follow directions in your use and care manual. Place herbs on a plate or dish. Microwave on high for 30 seconds the first time, then in 10 to 15 second intervals until almost dry. Always watch herbs while microwaving and heat for seconds at a time.
- **Dehydrator:** Follow the use and care manual for the electric dehydrator. Use a fine mesh tray (which usually comes with the dehydrator), cheesecloth or parchment under the herbs. The leaves shrink as they dry and will fall through standard holes.
- **Package** dried herbs in a tightly sealed container or bag. Label and date. Store in a dark place. If moist or moldy, discard. For best flavor and color use within 1 year.



Safety of Herbs in Oil, Garlic in Oil and Pesto

- To prevent illness: make and eat herbs or garlic in oil or pesto within 2 hours. Store in refrigerator up to 4 days.
- Herbs or garlic in oil and pesto create an airless environment which is favorable to *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria growth. *C. botulinum* spores are naturally found in the environment and can cause illness or death when the spores germinate and the cells grow and produce a toxin. **Botulism could result if these products are stored at room temperature longer than 2 hours.** See the *University of California Factsheet on storing garlic* for more information.
- There is NO safe method to “can” herbs or garlic in oil or pesto at home. Commercially available products are acidified to prevent bacterial growth and use processes not available at home.
- Freezing herbs in oil or freezing pesto is a safe alternative.

FCHS Outreach Targets Snap Recipients At Mercer County Farmers' Markets

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SNAP-Ed is a federally funded grant program, administered through the New Jersey Department

of Health, that teaches SNAP-eligible consumers about nutrition, food budgeting, and how to make physical activity a part of their day. The Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS), a part of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, is one of three partners offering nutrition and physical activity programming as part of New Jersey's SNAP-Ed program. FCHS manages SNAP-Ed in 4 counties: Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer Counties.

As a SNAP-Ed partner, FCHS works with community-based agencies and schools in Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer Counties to provide education aimed at reducing hunger and preventing obesity. With funding from a SNAP-Ed grant, FCHS provides classes and programs that offer practical information on nutrition, cooking, food safety, and physical activity to address the needs of audiences at every stage of life.

Throughout each county, interventions help consumers gain knowledge and adapt their habits, and help organizations and communities adapt their policies and environments to create healthier lifestyles. New Jersey SNAP-Ed has 11 different interventions available. They

target a variety of settings, including community groups, schools, houses of worship, and corner stores.

In Mercer County, FCHS is closely associated with farming and agriculture. Local farmers' markets are great locations for nutrition education. One goal of FCHS' SNAP-Ed work in Mercer County is to increase the awareness of local food via education and marketing at farmers' markets. FCHS conducts a significant amount of programming at local farmers' markets, using their Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables (JSY) intervention. By doing so, FCHS is able to show the relationship between nutrition and the fresh produce available. FCHS nutrition educators use JSY to provide demonstrations and food sampling along with a brief nutrition lesson.

FCHS faculty and staff work alongside the farmers from local markets such as the Greenwood Avenue Farmers' Market, Battle Monument Farmers'



Market, and Trenton Farmers' Market. Customers at these markets learn about fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables, and how to incorporate them into meals by taking part in JSY nutritional demonstrations. JSY promotes the benefits of increasing the variety and amount of fruits and vegetables consumed.

Joan Healy, MBA, RDN, an FCHS Program Associate who works with SNAP-Ed in Mercer County, added that going to farmers' markets and reaching out to the community is an engaging way to educate on the go. We asked her a few questions to get a sense of how JSY works:

Q: How do you attract people to take part in the lesson?

A: We use posters to advertise class times and length. We also pass out flyers when the class times are approaching. We find that personally inviting people to join the class with a warm welcome and great enthusiasm about the lesson, and taste-testing is a great way to encourage shoppers to join in. We also provide educational enhancements (like colanders, cutting boards, or an apple slicer).

Q: How many people do you teach per visit at a farmer's market?

A: We average 18-20 people per class. We keep class size small so participants have the opportunity to ask questions, taste-test recipes, and engage in the learning process. Our outreach goal for the year is 150 participants, so steady marketing and a regular class schedule will help us reach that goal.

Q: Do the farmers' markets notice any type of increase in produce sales as a result of the intervention?

A: Before we plan our lessons, we work with farmers to identify what will be featured at the farmers' market that day and what they'd like us to feature in the taste-testing recipe we use for sampling. We then source as many ingredients as possible from those farmers, advertise their names in the recipes, and note the farm source to participants. We also feature "market deals" of produce as it relates to our lesson or recipe which we display.

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FCHS Outreach Targets Snap Recipients At Mercer County Farmers' Markets - continued from page 7

One example of how this helps sales for farmers is based on an experience we had with a vegetable farmer at the Greenwood Ave Farmers Market. This farmer grew and sold many unique varieties of leafy greens, but many customers were unfamiliar with them. We sampled several of those unique greens in our recipe demonstration and taste-test. During the end-of-season wrap-up meeting, that same farmer explained that the taste tests and recipes helped her sell out her greens each week that she had formerly struggled to sell.

Q: Are there any recent participant success stories you can share?

A: When sampling a zucchini walnut salad that we demonstrated at the Trenton Farmers Market, one participant said, "The only thing I ever thought to do with zucchini was to make zucchini bread. Now, I have a new recipe!" We ran out of recipe handouts that day and had to make more copies due to the successful, delicious zucchini salad that day!

By reaching out to collaborate with farmers' markets, FCHS faculty and staff in Mercer County are using JSY to promote the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables. With the help of statistical data, FCHS hopes to see that consumers are increasing fruit and vegetable consumption by learning practical skills to make local fruits and vegetables a part of their daily diets. **For more information: "New Jersey SNAP-Ed Region 2." (Rutgers NJAES), 2019, njaes.rutgers.edu/snap-ed/.**