

Fill your Pantry: Food Preservation in a Digital Landscape

L. Peterson MS, ML. Wright MS, K. Bogdonas MPH, S. Glassman MS Ed, C. Mellendorf MS, RD, D. Reinhold MS, MPH, RDN, J. Smith MPH, RD
University of Illinois Extension

Abstract

During the 2020 pandemic, University of Illinois Extension Nutrition and Wellness team adapted quickly to provide food preservation webinars and digital resources. Having reached over 1.6 million people through broadcast, print, social, and virtual media. By layering various media dedicated to consumer food safety and preservation Extension was able to reach a broader audience.

Introduction

University of Illinois Extension Nutrition and Wellness team adapted quickly to offer a series of webinars addressing current food preservation techniques and used multiple social media platforms to provide relevant food safety information. Two highlights were their *31 Days of Food Preservation* social media campaign and the Fill your Pantry: Home Food Preservation webinar series. The *31 Days of Food Preservation* social media campaign provided readers with daily tips on current food preservation methods. The Fill Your Pantry: Home Food Preservation webinar series covered current research-based food preservation information, promoted the importance of working in a clean and sanitary environment, using scientifically tested recipes, and utilizing seasonal fruits and vegetables.

The resources used to develop the two projects came from reputable research-based organizations. These resources include the current United States Department of Agriculture Home Canning Guide, the National Center for Home Food Preservation, and other University Cooperative Extension services throughout the United States.

Methodology

The Nutrition and Wellness Educator team developed eight one-hour food preservation webinars. Each session (webinar) focused on either a type of produce or a method of preservation. Webinars were offered during the peak harvest season of July and August 2020. Current food safety practices were emphasized, and myths debunked. Participants were encouraged to use the chat box for comments and questions. Information was shared and questions answered in real time with participants submitting well over 200 questions.

Thirty-nine social media posts were created with facts and myth busting information in addition to marketing for the webinars.



Digital Outreach

The results of the social media engagement resulted in reaching over 1.6 million individuals mainly through the University of Illinois Extension and the Family and Consumer Science Facebook page.

Social Media	Outreach
Facebook Events for Fill your Pantry Webinar Series	425,300 individuals reached
31 Days of Food Preservation Social Media Graphics Campaign for Facebook & Twitter	51,783 individuals reached
Print Media	Outreach
Weekly News Release Covering Food Preservation from July-August, 2020	813,617
Radio Segments	Outreach
Monthly Radio Segments and Podcasts from July-August 2020	240,000

Access the 31 Days of Food Preservation toolkit at go.illinois.edu/nutritionwell



Impact Data Results

The table below shows registration and participant attendance. Participants completed a post-webinar evaluation for each of the eight sessions. After completing the evaluation, they were sent the handouts.

Fill Your Pantry 8-Part Food Preservation Webinar Series Engagement and Individuals Reached		
Registration	Attendees	Evaluation Return Rate
5,600	2,380	42.3%

Attendees were counted based on attending sessions for 20 minutes or more

Post-Webinar Evaluation Results (n=1,009)

79.2% of participants completing evaluation data indicated increased knowledge related to food safety while handling and preparing foods during home food preservation.

83.7 % of participants completing evaluation data indicated increased confidence in following safe home food preservation methods discussed in the webinar lesson.

74.8% of participants completing evaluation data indicated they were very or extremely likely to up put a preservation technique into practice as a result of these webinars

90.8% of participants completing evaluation data self-reported increased ability to practice safe food preservation techniques

What We've Learned

Higher success of engagement is achieved when focusing programming in one specific area and layering broadcast, print, social, and virtual media.



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN