Successful Transformation of Food Preservation Classes to an Online Format

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Abstract
The Michigan State University Extension Food Safety team successfully transitioned face-to-face food preservation programs to a live webinar format in 2020. Classes included demonstrations and activities during instruction. Due to the large interest, a series of Food Safety Q&A sessions were also offered weekly, complementing and expanding food preservation knowledge for consumers. Through this effort, we were able to reach a large diverse audience from across the country as well as the world. This online education effort was timely due to the increase in the number of consumers preserving food at home as evidenced by shortages of canning supplies such as canners, jars, lids, etc. Live panelist discussion revealed the depth of misinformation and unsafe practices happening with food preservation and the need for more researched-based education. This modified format increased our knowledge in presenting Zoom webinars, creating interactive presentations and video demonstrations that can be duplicated in other states.

Introduction
Michigan State University Extension food preservation classes historically held traditional in-person programs using instructional teachings and hands-on activities or demonstrations. Upon the stay-at-home order, classes quickly transitioned to an online class format. Topics were selected based on general themes that included topics such as Blanching and Freezing; Canning High-Acid Foods and Low-Acid Foods; Dehydrating; and Pickling. To offer a wider variety of subject matter, topics evolved into Preserving Meat; Peaches - Can or Freeze; Preparing Soups and many more. Classes were held weekly April through December at two different times, accommodating a wider audience.

Methodology
Teaching delivery medium: Online via Zoom Webinars

Development of classes
- Microsoft Teams was used to schedule, collaborate, organize and create material remotely.
- Class topics used were research-based methods and processes chosen based on season and demand.
- Live panelist discussion Q&A at the end of the session.
- Interactive Polls included for participant engagement
- Video demonstrations and step-by-step photos were used to increase participant knowledge

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Poll - Resources
What resources do you use to find recipes when preserving foods at home?

Results, continued

5 Year Food Preservation Program Outreach

Participants complete a retrospective survey after the program using a Likert scale evaluation.
- 86% were confident in their knowledge of safe home food preservation practices.
- 93% were confident in their ability to follow safe home food preservation practices.
- 88% know where to go for safe, research-tested recipes.
- 83% are confident in their abilities to share safe food preservation methods with friends, family and online communities.
- 83% will use the food preservation resources provided.
- 74% will explore information on the MSU Extension page.
- 61% will check their resource with up-to-date resources.
- 72% follow the research-based directions provided.
- 76% preserve food more often at home.

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