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# THE WSU ORGANIC STANDARD

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## Preserving the Harvest

The end of summer is the time to get serious about food preservation for the cold winter months to come. After this year's mini-summer, I hate to even bring up the topic of colder weather, but the change is in the air and we can't ignore the inevitable. My kitchen at home is filled with boxes of fruits and vegetables waiting to get processed into canning jars, freezer bags, or onto the drying rack.

Canning is one of the great traditions that many people have either forgotten or haven't been exposed to. The basic idea is to preserve a food in a sealed glass jar through a heating process that eliminates the entry of air and bacteria to the food. It's probably the most complicated of the three I'll mention but one of the most satisfying to complete and a joy to partake. Cracking open a jar of summer peaches in the middle of a January snow storm is real treat.

Freezing is a much easier process but works best if you have a dedicated chest freezer to store the goods. Many fruits and vegetables can be directly frozen while others need to be blanched first. Our favorites are berries, which seem to always be in demand, as well as pesto frozen in ice cube tray sizes. A large freezer is also a good idea if you plan on putting up any type of meats. Ours is filled with a great mix of farm-raised chicken, fruit, veggies, and anything else we can squeeze in before the snow flies.

Dehydration is another simple process but works best with some sort of commercial or home-built dehydrator. We purchased a "Living Food Dehydrator" kit from the MacManiman's in Fall City, WA. We've loved experimenting with everything from greens to fruit leather. This particular dehydrator is a free-standing wooden unit with a heating element in the bottom that

dries up to 10 2'x2' trays at once. There are lots of other models on the market or you can build your own. Once the food is dried it stores best in plastic zip-lock bags or jars in the house away from heat and light.

These are the major forms of processing foods for storage and are different from just putting away "storage crops" which we'll talk more about in later newsletters. One thing we did try this year in the CSA is offering "Canning Shares" to the members to help encourage some of these techniques. So far we've offered two pesto shares with garlic and basil, and are doing a salsa share this week that includes all the ingredients for a basic tomato salsa. Coming up is a green bean share. We had hoped to do a pickle share but have had a tough time with the pickling cucumbers. While these shares have been well received, it has been a little tough on our end to get the crops to cooperate.

--Brad

### **For More Info on Food Preservation:**

The Moscow Food Coop has been offering food preservation classes this year. Contact Carol Spurling at [outreach@moscowfood.coop](mailto:outreach@moscowfood.coop) for more info or go to the Co-op's website. Carol also recommends the Latah County Extension food preservation class with Karen Richel. Contact her at [krichel@uidaho.edu](mailto:krichel@uidaho.edu). A couple of good websites to check out are: <http://info.ag.uidaho.edu/catalog/catalog.html> OR <http://pubs.wsu.edu>.



While a jar of home-canned salsa never goes astray in our house, it's equally nice, when the ingredients are readily available and the weather warm, to enjoy the uncooked variety, *salsa fresca*! Try it with this quick yet satisfying black bean salad or, of course, with your favorite tortilla chip!

--Jamaica

### Salsa Fresca

Makes about 2 cups.

3-4 medium ripe tomatoes, chopped

1 small to medium yellow onion, peeled and minced

1 clove garlic, peeled and minced

1 jalapeño pepper, stemmed, seeded and minced

1/4 cup chopped cilantro leaves

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice or 1 teaspoon red-wine vinegar

Salt and freshly ground pepper.

Combine all ingredients, taste and adjust seasoning as necessary. Let sit for about 15 minutes or so, so flavors "marry" and serve within a couple of hours.

### Southwestern Black Bean Salad

*Adapted from Simple Suppers, by The Moosewood Collective (Clarkston Potter Publishers, 2005). It probably goes without saying, but you can add any number of other vegetables to this salad—try adding thinly sliced green beans, sweet peppers, or a grated carrot; cubed and roasted eggplant would also be a delicious addition with the fresh corn and the salsa!*

**This serves 4 healthy appetites as a main dish.**

¼ chopped fresh cilantro

1-2 thinly sliced scallions or 1 tablespoon onion, minced

¼ cup lime juice

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ cup olive oil

1 15-ounce can of black beans, rinsed and drained, or 1 ½ to 2 cups cooked

1 ½ cups corn kernels

2 avocados, sliced in planks

1 cucumber, chopped

½ cup black olives, chopped

½ cup grated cheddar cheese

8 cups salad greens

Salsa Fresca

Tortilla chips

I usually begin by making the dressing—otherwise it seems I rush around with the whisk at the last minute! For the dressing, place the cilantro, scallions/onion, lime juice and salt in a food processor (or mince fine and place in a small bowl). Pulse to combine well, then, with the processor running (or your whisk at the ready) drizzle in the olive oil and combine until the oil has emulsified, or is well blended with the other ingredients. Set aside.

Next, rinse and pat dry the salad greens, tearing big leaves into bite-sized pieces, and place in a large salad bowl. Toss with ¼ cup of the dressing. Pour the black beans over the greens. If using fresh corns, cut the kernels off the cob, and I wouldn't hesitate to put the kernels directly on the salad, raw. Add any other raw vegetables you will be using and finish with the olives and avocado arranged on the top. Drizzle with more of the dressing. Sprinkle with cheese and arrange tortilla chips around the edge of the bowl.

Serve with salsa fresca to dollop over individual servings, as well as extra chips. Enjoy!