Interest in home canning and food preservation is very high due to school and community garden initiatives, public movements in supporting local food producers and family economic concerns. The increases in school gardens and teaching students about nutritious use of the foods grown in them have now resulted in interest about teaching about the preservation of food that can be done in households. In partnership with, and at the request of, the state Department of Education, the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension provided the first-ever 10-hour introductory hands-on canning workshop to 17 agriculture education school teachers from across Georgia in July 2012. The workshop was conducted in a family and consumer sciences foods classroom in a public high school, so the environment that would be available to the teachers at their schools was realistic. The scores on a knowledge test went from a class average of 47.5% (pre-test) to 83.3% (post-test). Participants also rated their knowledge level on 5 domains about safe canning. Their self-assessments increased from an average of 2.2 out of 5.0 (ranging on individual items from 1.7-2.5) to an average of 4.6 (ranging from 4.4-4.7). Ten of the participants indicated they would use the information within 1 month; four indicated it would be used within 6 months and two indicated within 1 year.
Extension Food Preservation Program Supports School Garden Teachers

January – October 2012

Submitted by
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Summary:
The University of Georgia food preservation specialist provided a successful 10-hour hands-on workshop in home food processing and preservation for Department of Education agriculture teachers.

Situation: Interest in home canning and food preservation is very high due to school and community garden initiatives, public movements in supporting local food producers and family economic concerns. Many school systems in Georgia have agriculture education teachers who supervise community canneries in the summer. However, the methods and procedures utilized in those canneries are not the same as those used by families and individuals at home. The increases in school gardens and teaching students about nutritious use of the foods grown in them have now resulted in interest about teaching about the preservation of food that can be done in households.

A high percentage of current home food processors use practices that put them at high risk for illness, and even death, injury and economic losses. (Natl. Center for Home Food Preservation [NCHFP] national surveys, 2001 and 2005.) About 1/3 of home canners feel free to adapt the directions or procedures they are given in their own way which can be hazardous. Over 2/3 of home canners do can low-acid foods; the prevalence of reported practices that put them at high risk for botulism from these did not decrease between the 2000 and 2005 surveys. Continual attention to education and public awareness of safe methods for home preserving is needed, as there is significant activity on the Internet and in communities with people sharing their unsafe methods with others. Recent estimates from a study released in 2010 by PEW Charitable Trusts put the cost a case of botulism at $726,362.

Program/Response: In partnership with, and at the request of, the state Department of Education, the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension provided the first-ever 10-hour introductory hands-on canning workshop to 17 agriculture education school teachers from across Georgia. The workshop was conducted in a family and consumer sciences foods classroom in a public high school, so the environment that would be available to the teachers at their schools was realistic.

Impact: The scores on a knowledge test went from a class average of 47.5% (pre-test) to 83.3% (post-test). Participants also rated their knowledge level on 5 domains about safe canning. Their self-assessments increased from an average of 2.2 out of 5.0 (ranging on individual items from 1.7-2.5) to an average of 4.6 (ranging from 4.4-4.7).

Ten of the participants indicated they would use the information within 1 month; four indicated it would be used within 6 months and two indicated within 1 year.