

Healthy, Happy Homemakers



Martin-Gatton
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment

The latest updates for the Hardin County Extension Homemakers

Newsletter Highlights

October Lesson handouts

Scholarship Winners

Area Chairman Openings

Member Highlight

Save these Dates:

October 7:

County Cultural Arts Contest

October 8:

Area Cultural Arts Contest

October 9:

Area Annual Meeting

October 12-18:

KEHA Week

October 19-24:

NEAFCS National Meeting for Agents

(Jennifer Bridge is the current

National President!)

October 27:

Using Your Air Fryer

Lesson Leader Training

Hello Homemakers!

I want to start by congratulating those of you who received awards or recognition at the County Annual Meeting, and to thank those of you who took time from your schedules to attend, make food, and help us set up or clean up. I am so grateful to work with a group of such fun, dedicated people and I love getting to celebrate the successes you have each year.

The world is heavy lately. Hate seems to win far more often than ever before, stress seems to swallow so many people whole, and the bright spots seem dimmer in many ways. But any time I see a group who celebrates one another, gives each other grace, and just has a good time together - I'm reminded how lucky I am that in my world - good outweighs. No matter what is going on outside my circle, inside it - I have a wonderful, chaotic, hilarious family, I have a job I genuinely enjoy doing each day, and I get to work with a group of individuals that I find teach me far more than I will ever teach them. So thank you for that.

I look up to so many of you. You have impacted how I do my job, how I treat other people, how I engage myself in the community in which I live, and maybe surprisingly to you - how I parent my children and support my husband in our marriage. Thank you all for being such great role models for me to learn from.

No real work-related message to say except thank you for the past year, and let's have an even better 2025-2026.

Dayna Fentress

Dayna Fentress

Family and Consumer Sciences Agent



Golden Years

WELLNESS & AWARENESS Conference



We had a great 2025 GoldenYears event, despite a bad weather day and a broken speaker box at the office. Thank you to everyone who attended!



IN REMEMBRANCE OF MAVIS HART, MOTHER OF
HOMEMAKER MEMBER REGINA GOODMAN

Member Highlight!

Cherie Mingus, a member of Cecilia Homemakers, is currently their Secretary/Treasurer. She has been a member of Hardin County Homemakers since 2013, joining after she retired from teaching. Cherie currently serves as the Hardin County Homemakers President, a member of the CEC, and a member of the Hardin County Extension District Board. In 2019 she attended the KEHA Leadership Academy just before Covid closed everything down. Cherie is also finishing up her 3-year term as the FCS delegate on the State Extension Advisory Council. She has received the Hardin County Homemakers "Volunteer of the Year" as well as the "Homemaker of the Year" award. She is a retired Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher who has taught for 32.5 years. During her teaching career she held several offices in various organizations. Cherie has been the National Association Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences (NATFCS) President, the Kentucky Association Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences (KATFCS) President, the Kentucky Association of Career and Technical Education (KACTE) President, and the Kentucky Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (KAFCS) President. In 2017, Cherie was inducted into the University of Kentucky School of Human Environmental Sciences Hall of Fame. Cherie serves as the Nominating Chairperson for the Kentucky State Family and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Cherie was just installed as the 2025-2027 State President of the Kentucky State Organization of Delta Kappa Gamma – an international society for female educators.



Cherie is active in her community. She currently volunteers for the Hosparus Thrift Shoppe, serves on the Youth Theatre of Hardin County as the Secretary and as their costume mistress, serves as Secretary for the Elizabethtown Hardin Larue Retired Teachers Association and Secretary/Treasurer for the 4th District RTA. She is a member of the DAR Captain Jacob VanMeter Chapter. Cherie is married to Gordon Mitchell Mingus and they have two adult children – Michael and Cherise. Michael is married to Lindsey and they have one daughter, Eilee Jean and one son, Kenton Porter.

Bazaar Update!

The Bazaar filled up within an hour and a half on opening day! We have filled up on the first day several times recently. but never so quickly.

We have several new vendors and what I think will be a great line up for a great day! Please make plans to support the kitchen, baked goods sale, and opportunity table by bringing items! And don't forget to share the date with everyone you know!

November 8
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Scholarship Winners



SADIE ATCHER - GRANDDAUGHTER OF MARY LOIS HILL
MICHAEL FITZPATRICK - GRANDSON OF GERALDINE BEUMEL
ALLIE LINK - NIECE OF JANE LINK
PRESTON MEREDITH - GRANDSON OF SUSANNE MEREDITH
AUBREE PHOUTHARANSY - GRANDDAUGHTER OF BETTINA MARPLE
CHASE PRICE - GRANDSON OF MARTHA THOMAS
JORDAN PRICE- GRANDSON OF MARTHA THOMAS
HANNAH RAGAN - GRANDDAUGHTER OF PAT WILSON
JAY SHINAULT - GRANDSON OF MARY ELLEN WILLIAMS

because of the success of recent bazaars, we were able to give out nine scholarships this year in the amount of 1500.00 each!! thank you for what you do to support the bazaar, and best of luck to these youth!

Blessing Box Ideas



PEANUT BUTTER TO GO
CRACKERS
TRAIL MIXES
BABY FOODS & SNACKS
100% FRUIT CHEWS
PULL TAB CANNED VEGETABLES
RICE
BEANS
VIENNA SAUSAGES
TUNA TO GO PACKS
CANNED SOUPS
BOTTLES OF WATER

TOOTHBRUSHES
FEMALE SANITARY NEEDS
DIAPERS
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
PENCILS
SOCKS
JUICE BOXES
BEEF STICKS/JERKY
BABY RICE CEREAL
CANNED BEEF STEW
FRUIT PACKED IN JUICE
WATER FLAVORING PACKETS

ITEMS NEED TO BE WITHIN THE SELL BY DATES, AND UNOPENED.



County Cultural Arts Contest October 7

bring items from
9:00 - 10:00 am

winners will advance to the area contest on October 8



HARDIN COUNTY

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

- ✓ for those caring for elderly parents
- ✓ for those caring with ill or special needs siblings or children
- ✓ for those caring for spouses, neighbors, friends or others

FIRST TUESDAY OF
EVERY MONTH
1:00 – 3:00 PM
NEXT: **OCTOBER 7**

? Patty Pruitt, gypsyquilter7@yahoo.com or call the office at 270-765-4121

 Cooperative
Extension Service

You're showing
you care.
Now let others
care about you.

FREE TO ATTEND

MEETING BEGINS AT
1:00 WITH SPEAKER,
THEN TIME FOR
SHARING
EXPERIENCES AFTER

Hardin County Extension Office
111 Opportunity Way,
Elizabethtown



Area News:

**AREA ANNUAL MEETING IS OCTOBER 9
AT ST. GREGORY IN COX'S CREEK - NELSON COUNTY
RSVP AND MEAL CHOICE ARE REQUIRED BY OCTOBER 1
\$20.00 TO ATTEND**

**REGISTRATION FORM IS IN YOUR YEARBOOK, OR
YOU CAN CALL OR COME TO THE OFFICE AND RSVP WITHOUT ONE!**

Get Involved!

**JEAN AULL, NEW AREA PRESIDENT, IS SEEKING INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS WHO
WOULD LIKE TO BE ACTIVE ON THE AREA LEVEL. AVAILABLE POSITIONS ARE
LISTED BELOW AND JEAN WOULD LOVE TO HAVE YOU!**

**The open positions and
their 2026 plan of work focus are:**

**Environment, Housing & Energy - Indoor
Air Quality**

**Food Nutrition & Health - Travel KY
from Your Kitchen, 2026-2027 Food
Culture in Other Countries**

**Management & Safety - Stretching Your
Dollar and/or Understanding Credit
Scores**



Home Freezing Basics

Annhall Norris, Family and Consumer Sciences.



Are you interested in saving time on meal preparation? Do you want to minimize food waste? Would you like to save money by extending the harvest from your garden, prolonging the use of leftovers, or stretching out the shelf life of sale items from the store? If the answer to any or all these questions is “yes,” consider preserving these foods by freezing. Freezing is one of the easiest, most convenient, and least time-consuming methods of preserving foods. Using your home freezer, basic containers, and research-based preparation techniques, you can extend the shelf life of most foods.

Freshness and quality at the time of freezing will affect the condition of frozen foods. When starting with peak-quality fruits and vegetables, meats, or leftovers, freezing allows you to preserve their vitamin content, natural color, flavor, and texture. Let’s look at the science of freezing so you can enjoy year-round freshness of your favorite foods.

Understanding the Freezing Process

Freezing at a temperature of 0°F or below preserves food for extended periods by preventing the growth of microorganisms (bacteria, yeasts, and molds) that cause both food spoilage and foodborne illnesses. For example, *Clostridium botulinum*, the microorganism that causes botulism and is of greatest concern in canning, does not grow or produce toxins at 0°F. For this reason, freezing can provide a safe and easy alternative to pressure canning low-acid foods.

The freezing process itself does not destroy microorganisms; it slows their growth. After thawing, however, microbes that may be present can become active under the right conditions and multiply

to levels that can lead to foodborne illness. Because of the risk of contamination, handle thawed foods like any perishable product. Thorough cooking will kill most microorganisms.

In addition to the food safety aspects of freezing, the process also affects enzymes naturally present in fruits and vegetables that promote the chemical reactions that cause ripening. Freezing slows down enzyme activity but does not stop these chemical and physical reactions that can lead to spoilage and deterioration. Blanching is a brief cooking technique using boiling water to inactivate enzymes that can affect the flavor, color, and texture of produce. A quick cooling in ice water stops the cooking process and aids in freezing. Most vegetables should be blanched before freezing for the best quality.

Fruits are not blanched like vegetables; they are pre-treated with an acid or packed in liquid for best quality. The exposure of cut fruit to oxygen results in enzymatic browning. Soaking fruit in a dilute solution of ascorbic acid (vitamin C), sugar, or lemon juice can prevent this naturally occurring process. For more information on freezing fruits and vegetables, refer to the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service publications *Freezing Fresh Fruits* (FCS3-336) and *Freezing Vegetables* (FCS3-335).

Over time, chemical and physical reactions in meat reduce the shelf life of meat products. The fat in meats becomes rancid and may develop off-flavors more quickly if exposed to air, light, moisture, or bacterial contamination. Controlling these factors by freezing these foods within a few days of purchase and using airtight containers or wrapping can improve the quality of frozen meat.

Quality Freezing

The amounts of water, sugar, muscle tissue, and air influence the freezing process of specific foods. As the temperature is lowered, the water molecules in food form ice crystals. Rapid freezing allows small ice crystal formation, improving the quality of the freezing process. Slow freezing results in large crystal formation, which can rupture the cell walls of the food, resulting in deterioration of the product. Then during thawing, products will drip and lose their moisture. This loss of moisture is known as freezer burn. Freezer burn occurs when frozen food is exposed to air. It is primarily caused by food not being properly wrapped or packaged in air-tight containers. Damage from crystal growth or freezer burn results in a loss of color (gray or brown), change in texture (tough or dry), difference in aroma, and modification to flavor. While the appearance of freezer burn indicates a loss of food quality, it is not a food safety issue. Cut away any freezer-burned portions of the food before or after cooking. Food with a large amount of freezer burn should be discarded for quality reasons.

If freezing is your preferred method of food preservation, a vacuum sealer is a good investment. Here are a few additional tips to improve the quality of your home-frozen foods. • Cool all food before packaging. • Pack or wrap food tightly to remove as much air as possible. If freezing in glass jars or containers with press-on lids, leave a headspace between the packed food and the lid of the container to allow for expansion of the food as it freezes. If using freezer paper, follow the directions on the package.

- Freeze food immediately after it is packaged to retain its nutritional value, natural color, flavor, and texture.

- Ideally, food should be quick-frozen within two hours and stored at 0°F or lower.
- Allow space between the packages in the freezer for air circulation. If the packages are stacked in several layers, those in the middle may freeze too slowly and result in a lesser-quality product. Once food is frozen, you can store the packages close together.

Foods That Don't Freeze Well

Certain foods may become soft and mushy, waterlogged, tough, or soggy when frozen, or their ingredients may separate. Some produce or combinations of food do not freeze well. Vegetables that do not freeze well include cabbage, celery, radishes, cucumbers, salad greens, and herbs.

Fruits with a high water content, such as watermelon, grapes, and citrus fruit, do not freeze well. However, if you are not concerned with texture, they work well in smoothies. Fresh tomatoes will separate, but if you plan to use them in chili or vegetable soup, they will work fine. If any of these foods are used in sauces, be warned that once these foods thaw, they may be mushy or cause a thinner sauce. This is true of foods made with eggs, milk, or mayonnaise as well; they may separate, causing less than a quality product.

Many baked casseroles or dishes that contain rice or pasta may not reheat well either. Fried foods also fall into this category. While many fried foods do not freeze well, the advent of the air fryer has allowed us to reclaim the original crispy texture when reheated. Remember, if your dinner wasn't your favorite, maybe wasting the electricity, time, and container required for freezing isn't a good idea.



Proper Packaging and Labeling

Proper packaging helps in preventing freezer burn and maintaining flavor, moisture content, and nutritive value in the dry climate of the freezer. The selection of containers depends on the type of food to be frozen, personal preference, and the container types that are available for purchase. Containers specially labeled “made for freezer storage” or marked with a snowflake symbol are available in most stores. ❄️

In general, freezer containers should be

- moisture-vapor resistant;
- durable and leakproof;
- strong and pliable, yet crack-resistant at very low temperatures;
- resistant to oil;
- able to protect foods from absorption of unpleasant odors; and
- easy to seal and label.

All frozen products should include a label on the container.

Include the name of the product, the date it was frozen, and the weight or number of servings. Good freezer management is essential to avoid wasting the food you have so carefully frozen. Keeping a record of the foods in your freezer will help you use your freezer wisely. Write down everything you put in or take out of the freezer, and use the “first in, first out” or FIFO method so you can use up older frozen food first.

Color changes can occur in frozen foods. Follow recommended storage times for optimum quality results for specific foods. For more information, refer to the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service publication Recommended Food Storage Times (FCS3-595).

Thawing Food Safely

There are only three ways to safely thaw food: in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave. Do not thaw foods at room temperature or outside. Doing so may lead to foodborne illness. Refrigerator thawing is the preferred method, as the internal temperature of the food does not rise above 40°F. Unfortunately, this is also the slowest method, so you need to plan ahead when defrosting large food items. Small food items may defrost overnight in the refrigerator, but most foods require a day or two. For example, a ten-pound turkey would take around two days to defrost. Thawing in cold water is much faster than refrigerator thawing, but it requires more attention. More importantly, this method should only be used for food that will thaw in less than four hours. Food should be placed in a leakproof plastic bag under cold running water or submerged in cold water. A leaking bag may allow bacteria from the air or the sink to contaminate the food. Also, food tissue absorbs water, resulting in watery, less-than-high-quality food. If the water isn't running, change the water every 30 minutes to keep the food cool. After thawing, refrigerate the food until ready for use or cook it immediately.

Microwave thawing should be used to defrost food only if you plan to cook it immediately upon defrosting. For best results, use your microwave's defrost setting. If your microwave does not have a defrost setting, check your microwave manual for instructions. If you can stir or rotate the food frequently, it will heat evenly as it defrosts. Always use a microwave-safe container when thawing.

Food Safety During Power Outages

If power for your freezer is interrupted, or if the unit is not operating normally, do not open the freezer door. Food in a loaded freezer will usually stay frozen for two days, even in the summer-time. If repairs cannot be made or service restored within one to two days, you could use dry ice to keep the food frozen, if it is available. Discard any foods that have been warmer than 40°F for more than two hours. Discard any foods that have been contaminated by meat juices. Dispose of soft or melted ice cream, due to loss of quality.

If it is freezing outside or there is snow on the ground, you may be tempted to keep food frozen outside until the power is restored. However, food stored outside may be exposed to the sun or environmental contamination, such as animals, rodents, or birds. Sometimes, cans left in the car or garage may accidentally freeze and become swollen. If the cans are merely swollen (not rusted or bursting at the seams) and you are sure the swelling was caused by freezing, the cans may still be usable. Allow the unopened can to thaw in the refrigerator. Once opened, do not taste the food if you are unsure about its safety. If the contents of the can look or smell abnormal, throw the can away. When in doubt, throw it out! You may safely refreeze frozen food that has thawed, if the food still contains ice crystals or if its temperature is still below 40°F. In general, if food is still safe to eat, it is safe to refreeze. Partial thawing and refreezing will lower the quality of fruits and vegetables. Meats may be cooked and then frozen again with little loss of quality. Use refrozen foods as soon as possible to maintain an acceptable quality.

Cooking Frozen Foods

Frozen raw or cooked meat, poultry, casseroles, and leftovers can be cooked or reheated right out of the freezer. Remember to plan for cooking times to be about 50 percent longer than the usual recommended cooking times.

Conclusion

Freezing is a simple, quick, and reliable way to preserve foods. By following proper procedures for freezing, thawing, and preparing foods, you can enjoy safe, high-quality, nutritious foods straight from the freezer.



References

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