



Smells, Tastes and Side Conversations

First year gardeners in the WISEWOMAN Entrepreneurial Gardening Program are required to complete the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-Ed) nutrition education series. Taught by Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) Educators, SNAP-Ed (from the US Department of Agriculture) provides

education on basic nutrition, food safety and how to save food dollars on a small budget.

Hearing the gardeners were interested in learning how to can food correctly, MSUE Educator and WISEWOMAN Gardening Coordinator, Helen Deflorio worked with MSUE Food Safety expert Karen Fifield to offer a canning class for WISEWOMAN gardeners.

“The women were especially interested in pressure canning,” said Helen.

The women had expressed some fears about canning and doing it safely. “The hands-on class allows the women to gain confidence and develop skills they can take home with them,” said Karen Fifield. For some the class is a refresher. For others it was their first

time canning. “It’s exciting to gather around the stove and watch the women share their tips and tricks with one another,” said Fifield.

The daylong class was held at a fitness center in Ogemaw County. In addition to an all-woman workout facility, the center offers spinning and yoga as well as a certified kitchen. The morning portion



of the class focused on canning using the water bath method. In the afternoon the women made spaghetti sauce using the pressure canning method. “It’s so wonderful to get everyone together,” said one of the women. “To share all the possibilities for new meals for our families,” said another. “We throw out ideas and watch it boil,” said a woman with a

grin as she stood over a pot of boiling water. As part of the class the women were able to take home cans of peaches and spaghetti sauce as well as recipes for using what they had canned. “Every participant also received a copy of the book *So Easy to Preserve*,” said DeFlorio. “It’s a great book that will expand their ability

to preserve what they grow by freezing, pickling or making jams and jellies.” The class also covered using herbs. They learned the proper way to cut fresh herbs and made ice cubes with them. “We really emphasize not using much salt,” said Fifield. Although some of the ingredients and supplies for the class were “local”, the plan is to

source more produce locally in the future. “We hope to place pre-orders with some of the WISEWOMAN gardeners and purchase directly from them,” said Fifield. As the steam from the canning pots subsided and the women gathered up their cans of peaches and spaghetti sauce there were plenty of hugs and parting words.

“I’m so excited to go home and get started,” said a woman, a grocery bag in each arm. “I absolutely loved it!” said another holding her can of peaches high overhead.