

Master Family & Consumer Sciences Volunteer Program Summary

Institution: Clemson University Extension

Program: Master Food Preserver

Contact: Susan Barefoot, Associate Director, Life Sciences and Food Systems
Program Leader, Food Safety, Nutrition and Health
Email: SBRFT@clemson.edu

Previously, Clemson Extension agents have led local versions of the Master Food Preserver program. Currently, Clemson Extension is in the early stages of developing a statewide program with a major focus on the safety aspects of food preservation.

Increased interest in locally grown foods has been accompanied both by increasing interest in preserving foods at home and increasing risk of serious food-borne illnesses for South Carolina consumers who lack knowledge of safe food preservation methods. To provide additional experts to share resources on safe preservation of locally grown fruits and vegetables, Clemson is working on an initiative that involves piloting a South Carolina Master Food Preserver certification program. This new program will build upon the current Canning Coach Volunteer Program. Clemson Extension will adapt other states' curricula to South Carolina specialty crops, develop an on-line food preservation microbiology class, devise on-site practical food chemistry and food preservation laboratory sessions, develop a comprehensive certifying exam and coordinate volunteers' community service. The program will recruit, train, test and mentor 15 volunteers and evaluate all aspects of this program. The development of a Master Food Preserver program will provide volunteer experts in safe canning and preserving methods and will assist Extension with promoting South Carolina-grown specialty crops, with training new Canning Coaches, with extending safe food preservation knowledge to help citizens safely preserve locally grown fruit and vegetable specialty crops, with increasing the consumption of those crops and thus with helping South Carolina's specialty crop farmers.