Preservar Comidas—
Reaching Spanish Speaking Consumers

The Situation
Throughout Idaho the Hispanic population is growing. In Gooding County the Hispanic population increased during the last decade from nine percent to 17 percent of the total population. Many of these are non-migrating families raising their families here, and partaking of community events and enriching their community with diverse traditions. While keeping their traditions, they are also adopting practices from their non-Hispanic friends and neighbors. Preserving food is one of these practices.

Canning information is often passed along by word of mouth. This can be unsafe because lifestyles have changed, and ingredients have changed, so rules our mothers followed may not be correct today. If food preservers don’t continuously update themselves on currently recommended techniques their canned product could be unsafe to eat and cause illness for their families. Experienced food preservers need to be updated with current accurate information as well as those who are new to food preservation. Keeping consumers abreast of current research in safe food preservation techniques is an important function of University of Idaho Extension Educators in Family and Consumer Sciences. Dedicated Extension-trained Master Food Preserver volunteers help people with food preservation and safety questions.

A challenge for Spanish-speaking home food preservers and University of Idaho Extension Master Food Preservers attempting to fill the need is that many resources are not available in Spanish. Of our Hispanic population, 91 percent speak Spanish in the home, and 62% of these report their ability to speak English is less than “very well.”

Our Response
The FCS Extension Educator and the four University of Idaho Master Food Preservers in Gooding County organized a two-session home food preservation series for Spanish-speaking food preservers. Fliers in English and Spanish advertising the classes were distributed throughout the county and articles placed in two area newspapers. The instruction was in English by the Master Food Preservers, however Spanish-speaking interpreters were provided. Finding volunteers to interpret was not easy. Many of those contacted declined, feeling not competent in translating canning terminology. The interpreters were effective, however. If they were stumped on a word, one of those more fluent in English in the audience helped out. Each session was two hours. The first class covered drying foods and canning tomatoes. The second class covered pickled vegetables and salsa as these were topics of interest to Hispanic preservers as researched by UI Master Food Preservers. Responding to participant requests,
a section was added on canning jams and jellies. The instructors demonstrated all steps of the canning or drying process and the audience sampled products.

All participants received a packet provided by the Extension Office, which contained the four canning bulletins in Spanish available from the University of Idaho (fruits, vegetables, tomatoes, salsa). Additional handouts provided by the Master Food Preservers were on drying fruits and drying vegetables (which Master Food Preserver Karen McHan had a friend translate into Spanish), currently recommended recipes, and elevations of communities in our area for canning times adjustment. All supplies were donated; there was no charge to the participants. Total attendance was nine women.

Program Outcomes
The participants were enthusiastic about wanting more classes. An evaluation form in Spanish was distributed at the end of the series. 100% of the class members said they learned a new skill, that what they learned would be useful, and that they were pleased to have had the interpreter. All wanted more classes. Four requests were for more about canning fruits, another wanted more jelly instruction.

Eighty-eight percent of those completing the class evaluation reported an increase in knowledge. On a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with “1” being “least” and “5” being “most,” knowledge increase reported by four participants was from a “2” to a “4.” For one the increase was from a “3” to a “5.” Two participants indicated a one point increase, a “3” to a “4.” By the end the series, a good rapport had developed between the audience, the instructors, and the interpreters.

The series will be repeated next year, with more hands on participation in a workshop format. Peggy Candy, UI Master Food Preserver from Hagerman, says “I feel it was worth the time and effort. The audience was interested, enthusiastic and we reached a group within our community that we hadn’t worked with before.”

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