

Strengthening Families

Cumberland County Center

September, October, and November 2015

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Contact Us

NC Cooperative Extension
Cumberland County Center
301 E. Mountain Drive
Fayetteville, NC 28306

(910) 321-6869 Phone
(910) 321-6883 Fax

cumberland.ces.ncsu.edu

Candy Underwood
Extension Agent
Family & Consumer
Sciences
candy_underwood@ncsu.edu

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Figs...Late Summer Treat

Nutrition

Figs are a high fiber food commonly consumed fresh or dried. Most Americans eat only about half the recommended amount of fiber daily.

Choosing fruits like figs that are high in fiber can help reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer, while helping with weight management as well.

Figs are also a good source of calcium, magnesium and potassium. Figs have a high sugar content which contributes to fermenting when the fruit is over-ripe.

Selection & Storage

Figs are delicate and perishable. Fresh figs have a sweet fragrance and are past their prime when the smell begins to sour. They are not tasty until soft and ripe.

Under-ripe figs can be kept at room temperature until they ripen fully, then stored in the refrigerator. They can be stored in the refrigerator only a couple of days. Store covered and keep in a shallow container for best results.

Along the Carolina coast, fig preserves are a family favorite, often put up in quantity to last the whole year. Whole figs cooked in a lemon-infused syrup make the perfect topping to a hot biscuit.

While drying figs is also a good preservation method, the humid climate in North Carolina is not suitable for using a sun-dried method. A home dehydrator is a better option.

Figs can be frozen on cookie sheets and then put into freezer storage containers. Just remove as many as you need for a scrumptious taste of summer next winter.

Practicing food safety is important when preparing any fresh produce.

Wash figs in cool water before eating and gently remove the stems.

Here are a few fresh ideas for adding figs to your diet:

- Add fresh, sliced figs to oatmeal or other whole grains while cooking.
- Poach figs in juice or red wine to serve with yogurt or frozen desserts.
- Add sliced or quartered to salads.
- Stuff fresh figs with goat cheese and slivered almonds for an appetizer or dessert.
- Chop and stuff into cored apples to bake. No need to add any sugar! Top baked apples with vanilla yogurt.

Pureed figs can be used to replace shortening or oil in baking. As a general rule, use only half of the normal amount for replacement. For instance, if a recipe calls for one cup shortening or butter, you can use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pureed figs as a substitute and omit the fat! The sugar can also be reduced by one-third because of the sweetness of the figs.

Source: Produce Lady

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Fig Preserves (about 10 half-pint jars)

3 quarts figs
3 quarts boiling water
4 cups sugar

1½ quarts water
2 lemons, thinly sliced (optional)



Pour 3 quarts boiling water over figs. Let stand 15 minutes. Drain and discard liquid. Rinse figs in cold water and drain. Prepare syrup by mixing sugar, 1½ quarts water and lemon. Boil rapidly 10 minutes. Skim syrup, remove and discard lemon slices. Drop figs into syrup, a few at a time. Cook rapidly until figs are transparent. Remove figs and place in shallow pan. Boil syrup until thick, pour over figs and let stand 6 to 8 hours. Sterilize canning jars. Reheat figs and syrup to boiling. Pour hot preserves into hot jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process 5 minutes in a **Boiling Water Bath**.

Fig Preserve Cake

Ingredients

Yield -1 10 inch cake

1 ½ cups sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground allspice
½ teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup vegetable oil
3 eggs
1 cup buttermilk
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 cup fig preserves
½ cup chopped pecans or ½ cup walnuts

Buttermilk glaze

1 ½ cups powdered sugar
¼ cup buttermilk
1 tablespoon real butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

1. Combine first 8 ingredients in a large mixing bowl; add oil and eggs, beating well at medium speed with electric mixer.

2. Add buttermilk and vanilla, beating well.
3. Stir in preserves and pecans or walnuts.
4. Pour batter into a greased and floured 10 inch tube pan.
5. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean.
6. Cool in pan 10 minutes; remove from pan and place on serving platter.
7. Pour buttermilk glaze over cake while both are still warm.

8.

BUTTERMILK GLAZE

Melt 1 tablespoon real butter in saucepan over low heat, add the buttermilk and the powdered sugar and heat till dissolved, then add 1 teaspoon vanilla extract.

If the glaze is too thin or thick add powdered sugar or more buttermilk accordingly till you get the consistency you like.



North Carolina Apples

How do you know whether an apple is ripe?

A ripe red apple has a soft, light green undercast of background color. Immature apples have a bright dark green undercast; overripe fruit has a dull, yellowish green background and soft, often bruised, skin.

Buying Tips: Look for apples that are free of bruises and firm to the touch. Larger apples should be very firm, since they mature faster than small apples and become soft sooner. Color should be judged relative to the variety. Brownish, russeted areas on the skin, usually caused by weather, mar appearance somewhat but don't affect the flavor.

Storage Tips: Care must be taken to store apples at home to keep them at their best. Keep small quantities of apples in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, away from strong smelling foods. The plastic bag helps the apples retain moisture and prevents shriveling. Refrigerator storage life is one to two weeks depending upon the variety and the maturity of the apple. Larger quantities may be stored in a cool, dark, airy place such as a garage or cellar. Line the box or container with plastic and cover the apples with a damp towel. Apples stored at room temperature will soften about 10 times faster than if refrigerated.

Basic Preparation: Peel apples, if desired, remove cores and slice or cut into wedges. Use an apple corer, if desired, or an apple cutter to separate fruit into neat wedges. When cut, an apple's inner color turns brown quickly, so dip slices or wedges in lemon juice and water to preserve the color.

Yield: One pound of apples = 2 large, 3 medium or 4 small apples.

One pound of apples yields 3 cups of diced fruit or 2 1/2 cups peeled, sliced fruit.

Two pounds of apples = enough for a 9-inch pie.

Nutrition Facts: One medium-sized apple yields between 70 to 90 calories. Apples are generous in

dietary fiber. They contain some minerals, organic acids, pectin, and vitamins A and C. Apples contain natural fruit sugars which can enhance the flavor of many foods with the addition of little or no extra sugar.

Source: NCDA& CS

Apple Chutney

(a delicious topping for pork chops or your favorite grilled meat)

- 3 apples peeled and diced (Granny Smith preferred for flavor)
- 1/4 cup diced sweet onion
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 teaspoon ground clove
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt to taste
- 1/4 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup sherry
- 4 tablespoons butter

Heat butter in pan, sauté onions until translucent. Add apples, cinnamon stick, clove, sugar, and bay leaf. Cook until apples start to soften. Add apple juice and sherry. Reduce mixture on a low heat until thick. Season with salt to taste.

Source: *Café on the Square, Ashville, NC*



Preserving Apples

Spiced Apple Rings (about 8 or 9 pint jars)

12 pounds firm tart apples
(maximum diameter, 2½ inches)
12 cups sugar
6 cups water
1¼ cups white vinegar
3 tablespoons whole cloves
¾ cup red hot cinnamon candies
or 8 cinnamon sticks and 1 tea-
spoon red food coloring (optional)

Wash apples. To prevent discoloration, peel and core one apple at a time. Immediately cut crosswise into ½-inch rings and immerse in an anti-darkening solution. To make flavored syrup, combine sugar, water, vinegar, cloves, cinnamon candies (or cinnamon sticks and food coloring) in a 6-quart saucepan. Heat to a boil, stirring constantly. Simmer 3 minutes. Remove apples from the anti-darkening solution and drain well. Add to hot syrup and cook 5 minutes. Fill half-pint or pint jars (preferably wide-mouth) with apple rings, leaving ½-inch headspace. Fill jars to ½ inch from top with hot syrup. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process for 10 minutes in a **Boiling Water Bath**.



Apple Butter (about 9 or 10 half-pint jars)

8 pounds apples
2 cups cider
2 cups vinegar
2¼ cups white sugar
2¼ cups packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
1 tablespoon ground cloves

Wash, remove stems, quarter and core fruit. Cook slowly in cider and vinegar until soft. Press fruit through a colander, food mill, or strainer. Cook fruit pulp with sugar and spices, stirring frequently. To test for doneness, remove a spoonful and hold it away from the steam for 2 minutes. It is done if the butter remains mounded on the spoon. Another way to determine when the butter is cooked adequately is to spoon a small quantity onto a plate. When a rim of the liquid does not separate around the edge of the butter, it is ready for processing. Meanwhile, sterilize canning jars. Pour hot butter into hot half-pint or pint jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims and adjust lids. Process 5 minutes in a **Boiling Water Bath**.

Sweet Apple Relish (4 pint jars)

4 pounds apples, peeled, cored and sliced thin
1¼ cups distilled white vinegar
1 cup sugar
½ cup light corn syrup
⅔ cup water
1½ teaspoons whole cloves
2 sticks cinnamon (3-inch pieces), broken up
1 teaspoon whole allspice

Immerse apples in a solution of ½ teaspoon ascorbic acid and 2 quarts of water to prevent browning. Combine sugar, corn syrup, 1¼ cups white vinegar, water, cloves, cinnamon and allspice; bring to a boil. Drain apples and add to syrup. Simmer 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Pack fruit into hot jars, leaving ½-inch headspace. Fill jars ½ inch from top with boiling hot syrup. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process 10 minutes in a **Boiling Water Bath**.

Source: So Easy to Preserve

