

Fair Entry Time
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UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers
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The El Dorado County Fair runs from June 16th through June 19th this year, but as anyone who has ever had an exhibit at a fair knows, the entry forms and items for display must be prepared well in advance of the gates opening to the general public. Animal exhibitors wash, brush and groom their entries, while food preservers bring out the goodies from the stocks put by over the year since the last fair ended.

The “Rockin’ and Wranglin’” for those interested in showing off their food preservation skills begins with choosing which category to enter. Under the umbrella of Still Exhibits, adults may place entries under Preserved Foods in the Canned Food category or in the Dried Food category. Separate judging for teens, youth and 4-H members ensure that participants compete against others of similar experience. Each age level competes under separate rules and regulations specific to that group.

All age groups require the exhibitors to have preserved the food themselves, and to have done so sometime since the close of last year’s fair. All exhibitors must closely follow the rest of the rules to ensure the safety of the judges. Only the most up to date methods of preserving will do for these judges...their health is on the line! All of the rules recommend the methods outlined in the UC Cooperative Extension leaflet, “Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, Meats and Fish” for preserving low-acid fruit, for instance.

Many types of preserved food will be found at the exhibits of the El Dorado County Fair. For example, under Division 274, Pickles, exhibitors will proudly display their best pickled beets, beans, asparagus, many different flavors of cucumbers, figs, peaches, other fruit, green tomatoes, Sweet Jardinière, various peppers, different vegetables, watermelon, and other pickled items not specifically mentioned. With many divisions and even more classes within those divisions, plenty of preserved foods will be on display.

Anyone interested in competing at the fair with preserved foods should examine the Fair Entry Guide. This year the guide may be viewed and/or downloaded from the website www.eldoradocounty.org. For adult, teen & youth preserved food entries, the entry forms are due by Friday, May 13 at 5 p.m. Entries will be received at the Home Arts (Marshall) Building Thursday, June 9 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and will be judged on Saturday, June 11 beginning at 9 a.m. The judging will be open to the public.

The Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County will be out in force at this year’s fair. Many of the members enjoy the friendly competition and the opportunity to “show off” their skill at preserving. The Master Food Preservers also enjoy sharing their knowledge, so anyone interested in competing in next year’s fair would be smart to attend the free public classes offered by the Cooperative Extension. The classes begin in July and run through October. Each presentation will be offered twice, once on Tuesday morning and again on Saturday morning.

The Master Food Preservers are also available free of charge to speak to organizations and clubs about food safety or food preservation topics. Just call 530-621-5506 to arrange for a speaker for small or large groups. For more information about the public education classes and activities, including the free public classes on food safety and pressure canning, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/.