

Summer Snacks
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“The kitchen is closed” sounds great, but never really works out when the kids, on summer vacation, seem to be hungry all day long. Home food preservers turn to healthy alternatives to chips and soda by using the stocks of dehydrated and canned goodies that have been put up during the year. Even those who have not stocked up can quickly provide enough real food to fill even the most tenacious snacker.

Bite-size pieces of cut up fruits and vegetables packed in easy to open containers and placed right on the shelf in the refrigerator will be eaten by all. Wash fruits and vegetables very well for at least fifteen seconds under cool, running water to remove all surface contaminants. Even if the fruit or vegetable will be peeled, wash the outside well, as the knife used to cut it may carry pathogens from the outside of the fruit or vegetable into the cut surface. Be sure the knife and cutting surface have been cleaned.

Dried fruits and vegetables, made at home without added sugar or chemicals always taste great and combined with nuts and seeds create a snack mix that everyone will enjoy. Follow the directions from the dehydrator manufacturer to dry the foods, and then freeze at 0°F or below for 48 hours to ensure that any insect activity ceases. Most kids enjoy dried fruit, although zucchini chips with some garlic salt sprinkled on before drying taste mighty yummy.

The best snacks for those hot summer days, however, seem to be the frozen snacks. Use 100% fruit juice to control the sugar content in homemade frozen juice treats. Peel and freeze bananas, wrapped in plastic wrap, for a potassium-rich snack. Grapes can be frozen whole (well-washed, of course) and popped into the mouth one at a time for a blissful bit of cold relief on a sweltering day.

For those who prefer to crunch, keep plenty of whole grain pretzels on hand. Some cereals can act as snacks, but remember to check the ingredients to ensure that whole grains and not sugar head the list! Choose stone-ground whole grain tortilla chips over strangely flavored potato chips and add zest with a homemade salsa. With a little planning, snack time (all day long) offers good nutritional opportunities.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our new Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews/>.