



Name _____

Date _____

Drying Food

Drying as a means of preserving foods can be traced back to 15,000 B.C., when food was dried by warm winds in Arabia and Egypt. It was an important method of food preservation used by Native Americans as well as the early settlers of our country. The following directions will help you make food similar to that eaten by the early settlers and Native Americans.

DRYING MEAT Beef Jerky

To jerk meat means to preserve it by cutting it into long thin slices and drying it in the sun, in an oven or in a microwave oven. Drying jerky in the sun takes a long period of time and is not very sanitary. Jerked meat is roughly one-fourth the weight of its fresh raw state. Use very lean flank steak that is partially frozen so it will be easier to cut. Cut the meat into thin strips 1 1/2" to 2" wide. Dip the strips in teriyaki sauce.

Oven Drying

Arrange the seasoned strips of meat in a single layer on wire racks -- cake-cooling or oven racks -- and place a piece of aluminum foil on the bottom of the oven to catch drippings. Preheat the oven to 150 degrees F and then turn the heat back to the lowest setting on your oven. Place the meat in the oven, leaving the oven door open at the first stop. After five or six hours, turn the strips over and continue drying at the same temperature for an additional four hours. When thoroughly dry the jerky is shriveled and black, and is brittle when cooled.

DRYING FRUIT Apples

Dry only apples that are in prime condition and absolutely fresh and handle them quickly. Cleanliness is extremely important at each step in the process. The apples that are best for drying are late-autumn or early-winter varieties such as Baldwin, Ben Davis, Northern Spy, Spitzenbury, Winesap, Jonathan, Greening, Rome Beauty, Red and Golden Delicious, and Russets.

Peel and core the apples; slice into thin rings. Coat the slices with a strong ascorbic acid solution to hold the color of the apples.

Put several inches of water in a large pot with a tight lid. Heat the water to boiling and set a wire rack or wire basket containing the apple rings above the water level. Cover and steam the rings for five minutes. Remove from the steamer and spread the rings on paper toweling to remove excess moisture. Note: For long-term storage and to insure better color of slices, it is necessary to treat the fruit with sulfur; however, sulfur is not recommended for this classroom project.

Thread the dry apple rings on clean twine and hang near the ceiling of a warm, dry, well-ventilated room such as an attic or above the stove in a kitchen. The apple rings are adequately dry when no wetness can be squeezed from the ring when it is cut into, and when the ring has a somewhat leathery feel. The rings can be pasteurized by baking them in a 175 degree F oven for 15 minutes.

References:

Hertzberg, Vaughan, Greene, *The New Putting Food By* Brattleboro: The Stephen Greene Press, 1982. Barbour, Beverly, *The Complete Food Preservation Book* New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1978.