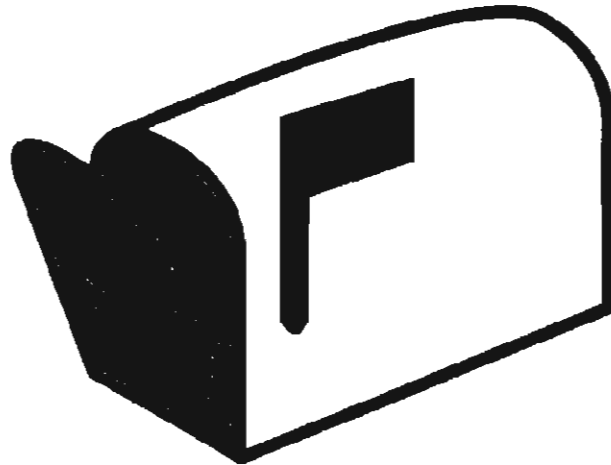


PARCEL POST CUISINE!



Presented by the UT Extension “Kitchen Divas”

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Family & Consumer Sciences!*

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Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development,
family and consumer sciences, and resource development.
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture
and county governments cooperating.
UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

Mailing Food Gifts to Friends and Family

When deciding on food gifts to mail to family and friends out of town or in the military, choose something that is non-perishable. It must be able to withstand a variety of temperatures for several days and survive a bumpy ride.

Perishable foods, such as meats, smoked fish, and soft cheeses, must be kept at or below 40 degrees F in order to remain safe to eat. These cannot be left at room temperature for more than two hours, so traveling for days in the mail would make these foods unsafe to eat. Sending these could cause your loved ones to get sick!

Instead of making food gifts at home, some people choose to use mail-order food services. Shelf-stable “summer sausage”, cheeses, cakes, and snacks can all be ordered from the Internet or catalogs and sent safely to their intended destination. These foods are packaged in a special way to make sure they arrive in good condition.

Recommended Food Gifts

- Dried beef or poultry such as beef jerky, turkey jerky, or beef sticks. Dried foods that have moisture removed will last longer and can even be sent overseas.
- Dehydrated soups and drink mixes.
- Commercially canned meats and specialties (tuna, chicken, crab, etc.) that can be enjoyed with crackers. (Recipients should not eat from any cans that are damaged or swollen.)
- Dense, dry baked goods such as fruitcakes and biscotti. Pound cakes and other dense cakes can be sent, but freeze these and send them as a perishable good. Depending on the delivery time, they could mold.
- Sturdy cookies like peanut butter, ginger snaps, and sugar cookies.
- Dried fruits such as raisins and apricots, canned nuts and fruit, and commercially packaged trail mix.
- Harder candies like peanut brittle or rock candy.

Avoid shipping foods high in moisture like quick breads, moist brownies, and soft cookies. Any type of cookies or tarts that are fragile may be destroyed during the trip. Foods should not be shipped in glass or fragile containers. Any food with liquid might drip and damage the packaging.

Adapted from Washington State University Extension

Packaging Foods

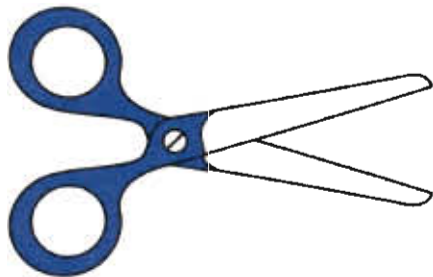
Rigid plastic freezer or refrigerator containers and metal canisters make the best shipping containers. Wrap food in aluminum foil or plastic before placing it in shipping containers. This will prevent food from “drying out” during shipping. Then choose a strong box to ship it in. Use crumbled newspaper or Styrofoam pieces as filler inside the box to keep foods from moving around so much.

If you are planning to ship food in the container it was baked in, let it cool and then remove it from the baking pan. After it is cool, wrap it in foil or plastic and then return it to the clean pan.

If sending cookies or candies, wrap each piece individually to preserve the shape.

Seal boxes tightly with packaging tape to prevent opening during travel.

If perishable foods are in the box, label it “perishable” so that it will be sent and delivered in the fastest way possible.



Make your own container for food using two one-gallon plastic milk jugs!

1. Cut the top half off each jug.
2. Wash and allow to air dry.
3. Place wrapped food inside one half and fill the empty spaces with crumpled paper.
4. Fit the second jug half over the first (like a lid) and seal with freezer tape.
5. Place in a sturdy box and mail!

Blueberry Scones Mix in a Jar

2 cups all-purpose unbleached flour
½ cup sugar
¼ cup nonfat dry milk powder
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon dried lemon peel
¼ teaspoon salt
1/3 cup shortening
1 cup dried blueberries (use fresh if not preparing for mix in a jar)

Stir together flour, sugar, milk, baking powder, lemon peel and salt. Cut in shortening using a pastry cutter or fork until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in berries. Layer into a 1-quart canning jar, tapping gently on the counter between layers to settle before adding the next. Add additional dried blueberries to fill in small gaps if necessary. Stores at room temperature for up to 6 weeks, or freeze for up to 6 months.

Attach the following instructions on a gift tag:

Blueberry Scones

Place jar contents in a large mixing bowl. Add 1 beaten egg, 1 teaspoon vanilla, and ¼ cup water; stir just until moistened. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and quickly knead gently for 12 to 15 strokes or until nearly smooth. Pat to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut into desired shape and place 1 inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Brush with milk. Bake at 400° F for 12-15 minutes or until golden. Transfer to a rack to cool slightly and serve warm.

Focaccia Mix in a Jar

1 package yeast
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1 ½ teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes (adjust for desired spiciness)
1 ½ teaspoons dried rosemary
1 ½ cups bread flour
½ teaspoon salt

Combine and pour into an airtight container.

Attach the following instructions on a gift tag if giving as a gift.

Focaccia

Contents of jar ½ cup warm water 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided Salt

Blend contents of jar, warm water and 2 tablespoons olive oil with a dough hook or wooden spoon until smooth. If it is dry, add water by the tablespoon. If it sticks, add a bit of flour. Knead until smooth. Transfer to an oiled bowl, turn to oil all over, cover and let rise until doubled. Heat oven to 425°F. Punch dough down and roll into a 13 x 9-inch rectangle. Brush with remaining oil. Sprinkle with salt; bake 5 minutes. Pop air bubbles with a fork and continue baking until golden, about 8 minutes more. Remove from pan and cut into 3-inch squares. Serve warm with pesto.

Brownies Mix in a Jar

2 ¼ cups sugar
2/3 cup cocoa
½ cup chopped pecans
1 ¼ cups self-rising flour

Pour sugar into a washed and dried 1-quart jar. Press down firmly. Add cocoa powder and press down firmly. Pour in chopped pecans, making sure pecans are evenly layered in the jar. Pour flour into jar and seal. Attach the following instruction on a gift tag if giving as a gift.

Brownies

Empty mix into large bowl. Use your hands to mix thoroughly. Add ¾ cup of butter or margarine and 4 slightly beaten eggs. Mix until completely blended. Spread batter into slightly greased or sprayed 9 x 13-inch pa. Bake at 350F for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in pan. Cut into 2-inch squares.

Turkey Noodle Soup Mix in a Jar

1 cup uncooked fine egg noodles
1 ½ tablespoons chicken-flavored bouillon
½ teaspoon ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
¼ teaspoon dried whole thyme
1/8 teaspoon celery seeds
1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
1 bay leaf

Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl. Store in an airtight container. Attach instructions to the jar.

Turkey Noodle Soup

1 package Turkey Noodle Soup Mix
8 cups water
2 carrots, diced
2 stalks celery, diced
1/4 cup minced onion
3 cups cooked diced turkey

Combine the soup mix and the water in a large stock pot. Add the carrots, celery, and onion and bring to a boil. Cover the sup and reduce the heat to a simmer. Simmer for 15 minutes. Discard the bay leaf. Stir in the turkey and simmer an additional 5 minutes.

Almond Biscotti

½ cup butter or margarine, softened
1 ¼ cups sugar, divided
3 eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp baking powder
Dash salt
½ cup chopped almonds
2 tsp milk



In a mixing bowl, cream butter and 1 cup sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in vanilla. Combine dry ingredients; add to creamed mixture. Stir in almonds. Line a baking sheet with foil and grease foil. Divide dough in half; spread into two 12 inch X 3 inch rectangles on foil. Brush with milk and sprinkle with remaining sugar. Bake at 375° for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown and firm to the touch. Remove from oven and reduce heat to 300°. Lift rectangles with foil onto wire rack; cool for 15 minutes. Place on a cutting board; slice diagonally ½ inch thick. Place slices with cut side down on ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 10 minutes. Turn cookies over; bake 10 minutes more. Turn oven off, leaving cookies in oven with door ajar to cool. Store in airtight container.

Cinnamon Roasted Almonds

1 egg white
1 teaspoon cold water
4 cups whole almonds
½ cup white sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 10x15-inch jellyroll pan.

Lightly beat the egg white. Add water and beat until frothy but not stiff. Add the nuts and stir until well-coated.

Mix the sugar, salt and cinnamon. Sprinkle over the nuts. Toss to coat and spread evenly on the prepared pan.

Bake for one hour in the preheated oven, stirring occasionally, until golden. Allow to cool, then store nuts in an airtight container.

Brownie Biscotti

1/3 cup butter, softened
2/3 cup white sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 tsp baking powder
½ cup miniature semisweet chocolate chips
¼ cup chopped walnuts
1 egg yolk, beaten
1 Tbsp milk



Preheat oven to 375°. Grease baking sheets, or line with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until smooth. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then stir in the vanilla. Combine the flour, cocoa and baking powder; stir into the creamed mixture until well blended. Dough will be stiff, so mix in the last bit by hand. Mix in the chocolate chips and walnuts.

Divide dough into two equal parts. Shape into 9x2x1 inch loaves. Place onto baking sheet 4 inches apart. Brush with mixture of water and yolk.

Bake for 20-25 minutes in the preheated oven, or until firm. Cool on baking sheet for 30 minutes.

Using a serrated knife, slice the loaves diagonally into 1 inch slices. Return the slices to the baking sheet, placing them on their sides. Bake for 10-15 minutes on each side or until dry. Cool completely and store in an airtight container.

Microwave Peanut Brittle

1 cup sugar
½ cup light corn syrup
1 ½ cups dry roasted peanuts
1 tablespoon butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking soda

Microwave sugar and corn syrup in large microwavable bowl on high for 5 minutes, stirring after 3 minutes. Stir in peanuts and microwave an additional 3-5 minutes, or until golden brown.

Add butter and vanilla; stir until butter is completely melted. Microwave 1 minute. Stir in baking soda. (Mixture will foam.)

Spread mixture on greased baking sheet. Cool completely. Break into pieces for storage.

Drying Fruit Leathers (Fruit Rolls)

Fruit leathers are homemade fruit rolls. They are a tasty chewy, dried fruit product. Fruit leathers are made by pouring pureéd fruit onto a flat surface for drying. When dried, the fruit is pulled from the surface and rolled. It gets the name "leather" from the fact that when pureéd fruit is dried, it is shiny and has the texture of leather.

The advantages of making your own fruit leathers are to save money use less sugar and to mix fruit flavors. Leftover fruit pulp from making jelly can be blended and made into fruit rolls.

For the diabetic adult or child, fruit leathers made without sugar are a healthy choice for snacks or desserts. Individual fruit leathers should contain the amount of fruit allowed for the fruit exchange.

Directions follow for making fruit leathers. Fresh, frozen or drained canned fruit can be used.

Leathers From Fresh Fruit

- Select ripe or slightly overripe fruit.
- Wash fresh fruit or berries in cool water. Remove peel, seeds and stem.
- Cut fruit into chunks. Use 2 cups of fruit for each 13" x 15" inch fruit leather. Pureé fruit until smooth.
- Add 2 teaspoons of lemon juice or 1/8 teaspoon ascorbic acid (375 mg) for each 2 cups light colored fruit to prevent darkening.
- Optional: To sweeten, add corn syrup, honey or sugar. Corn syrup or honey is best for longer storage because it prevents crystals. Sugar is fine for immediate use or short storage. Use ¼ to ½ cup sugar, corn syrup or honey for each 2 cups of fruit. Saccharin-based sweeteners could also be used to reduce tartness without adding calories. Aspartame sweeteners may lose sweetness during drying.

Leathers From Canned or Frozen Fruit

- Home preserved or store-bought canned or frozen fruit can be used.
- Drain fruit, save liquid.
- Use 1 pint of fruit for each 13" X 15" leather.
- Purée fruit until smooth. If thick, add liquid.
- Add 2 teaspoons of lemon juice or 1/8 teaspoon ascorbic acid (375 mg) for each 2 cups of light colored fruit to prevent darkening.
- Applesauce can be dried alone or added to any fresh fruit pureé as an extender. It decreases tartness and makes the leather smoother and more pliable.

Preparing the Trays

For drying in the oven a 13" X 15" cookie pan with edges works well. Line pan with plastic wrap being careful to smooth out wrinkles. Do not use waxed paper or aluminum foil.

To dry in a dehydrator, specially designed plastic sheets can be purchased or plastic trays can be lined with plastic wrap.

Pouring the Leather

Fruit leathers can be poured into a single large sheet (13" X 15") or into several smaller sizes. Spread pureé evenly, about 1/8-inch thick, onto drying tray. Avoid pouring pureé too close to the edge of the cookie sheet. The larger fruit leathers take longer to dry. Approximate drying times are 6 to 8 hours in a dehydrator, up to 18 hours in an oven and 1 to 2 days in the sun.

Drying the Leather

Dry fruit leathers at 140°F. Leather dries from the outside edge toward the center. Test for dryness by touching center of leather; no indentation should be evident. While warm, peel from plastic and roll, allow to cool and rewrap the roll in plastic. Cookie cutters can be used to cut out shapes that children will enjoy. Roll, and wrap in plastic.

Chances are the fruit leather will not last long enough for storage. If it does, it will keep up to 1 month at room temperature. For storage up to 1 year, place tightly wrapped rolls in the freezer.

Spices, Flavors and Garnishes

To add interest to your fruit leathers, spices, flavorings or garnishes can be added.

Spices to Try — Allspice, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, ginger, mace, mint, nutmeg or pumpkin pie spice. Use sparingly, start with 1/8 teaspoon for each 2 cups of pureé.

Flavorings to Try — Almond extract, lemon juice, lemon peel, lime juice, lime peel, orange extract, orange juice, orange peel or vanilla extract. Use sparingly, try 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon for each 2 cups of pureé.

Delicious Additions to Try — Shredded coconut, chopped dates, other dried chopped fruits, granola, miniature marshmallows, chopped nuts, chopped raisins, poppy seeds, sesame seeds or sunflower seeds.

From "So Easy to Preserve"- The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service