

Herb lady tells how it all began

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For more information on how to get in on this, she may be reached at Matthaei Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Folks interested in entering the amateur horticultural sale may contact her directly at 763-7061.

And if all of that isn't enough, the Steinhauers are also active environmentalists. She abhors the use of pesticides and says that the best pesticide of all is "your own two hands." She composts clippings and garbage and uses the natural fertilizer to

keep her garden healthy.

IN THE FALL, she sows annual ryegrass to help keep the garden from eroding and to add valued nutrients, not to mention that the grass "looks great in the late fall when everything has been turned under for a winter's sleep."

If you are into herbs and gardening as much as Steinhauer, you will want to stop by Matthaei Gardens. Maybe you will be lucky and she will have a pot of chamomile tea brewing on the portable stove.

Here are a couple of herb lady Di-ane Steinhauer's tried-and-true recipes.

HERBAL CAMOMILE TEA
10 tablespoons flower heads of chamomile
4 cups fresh water, brought to rolling boil

First, bring fresh cool water to a rolling boil. Then rinse a china, pottery or nonmetallic teapot with some of the water. Toss in the herbs (2 tablespoons fresh or 1 tablespoon dry). Add the water and allow the tea to "steep" for about 5 minutes. Strain the herbs as soon as the tea reaches desired strength. Serve with honey, lemon, orange slices or fresh herb sprigs. To make iced tea, follow the same procedure, using 3 tablespoons of fresh herbs per one cup of

CREAM OF SORREL SOUP
1 cup fresh sorrel leaves
1 tablespoon butter or oil
1 small clove garlic, minced fine
4 cups good chicken stock
1 cup heavy or whipping cream
salt and pepper to taste

Wash and pat dry sorrel leaves. Chop fine. In a heated saucepan, add butter or oil and saute chopped herbs with the garlic for 1 minute. Stir in chicken stock and simmer for 10 minutes. Place soup in a blender or processor. Raise the temperature of the cream with a little hot soup, stirring constantly, making sure not to boil. Correct taste with salt and pepper, if desired.

water. The extra allows for melting ice.

Shelf-stable foods are fast

"Is it ready?" "Can we eat?" "Let's go." are busy phrases for the eat-and-run families.

Busy lifestyles have demanded foods that are quick-cook, easy to store, with no mess and no clean-up. Even though these foods have been designed to benefit working parents, singles, older adults and children, do you get the feeling you're cooking with a stop watch?

No refrigeration and two minutes in the microwave can provide a meal from a shelf-stable package. No need to worry about storage as these packages can sit on the shelf from 18-24 months because of heat sterilization. This makes the food as safe as if it were in a traditional metal can. The oxygen-free environment created by this process makes the survival of most food-poisoning bacteria impossible.

The manufacturer claims that these shelf-stable products are more fresh-like and retain more nutrients because this process is done so quickly. Check the package for a "see by" or "use by" date, and use as a guideline.

These packages are really a portable food. Put them in your purse or briefcase to take to work, school or anywhere there is a microwave.

Single-serving frozen entrees are not new. However single servings of one food, especially side dishes, are new. These foods are designed for people who eat alone. You heat in them, and eat from the container and throw away. No messy cooking, no messy clean-up or dishes to wash.

HOWEVER, THE COST is a little



Lois Thieleke

home economist, Cooperative Extension Service

more than other frozen foods. Another advantage of the single servings is that you can buy all kinds of ethnic foods that add a lot of variety to meals. No leftovers to have to re-heat the next day, either.

Safety is always a concern with food and working with appliances. "Crisping cards" have been added to fish and potato products and to pizza so that the food will be crispy, not soft. These cards made of aluminum-coated plastic become extremely hot and can burn you easily. If children are making these for snacks, caution them about the heat also. Whether food is designed for a microwave or a conventional oven, take care with safety.

Fresh refrigerated foods are now reshaping the meaning of convenience. The foods have that just-cooked flavor more so than frozen or canned. These foods are spared the extreme heat of canned foods and extreme cold of frozen, both of which damages the cell structure of

the food. They also retain fresher flavor, texture and color. Compared to frozen and canned, the nutrient quality is also better.

Unlike canned or other shelf-stable foods, refrigerated foods are not heated to a sufficient temperature for a long enough time to destroy all possible bacteria. Refrigeration temperatures will slow or prevent multiplication of most bacteria but do not prevent all bacterial growth.

TEMPERATURE IS absolutely critical for fresh, refrigerated foods. Recognize the packages that contain the fresh, refrigerated foods. They

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sometimes look like shelf-stable products. Foods purchased in the deli, dairy case or refrigerated meat sections in the store have to be kept at refrigeration temperatures at all times.

Read the label and pay special attention to key words like "keep refrigerated," "sell by" or "use by" dates. Chill foods in the colder lower areas of your refrigerator, not on the refrigerator door.

These foods need to be heated thoroughly before serving. Follow the directions and recommended cooking times and temperatures. When microwaving, always stir foods to distribute the heat evenly and allow to stand before serving. Don't worry unduly about the safety risks of fresh, refrigerated foods. However, be smart about buying, storing and cooking these products.

There is no doubt that microwaves have changed the packaging of foods. The microwave is the key cooking appliance for three out of four households, so manufacturers are designing new foods and new packages for the busy consumer lifestyle.

If there are only a few minutes on your cooking stop watch, you may want to consider some of this new generation of convenience foods.

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