



PROGRAM ON THE ENVIRONMENT

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

FROM FIELDS TO TABLES: THE POWER OF FOOD PRESERVATION IN GLEANING ORGANIZATIONS

Session Day 2, In-Person

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The seasonal nature of harvesting often constrains gleaning organizations from their goal of collecting excess fresh food from harvests, and food preservation offers the opportunity to establish a year-long approach. Gleaned fruit is typically distributed to food banks and charitable organizations that serve food-insecure populations, ensuring that surplus and excess produce does not go to waste and instead reaches those in need. Nevertheless, in the off-season, these food banks experience a shortage of nutritious fruit and other local produce, highlighting the potential role of food preservation methods in bridging this supply gap. The primary objective of this research was to identify optimal food preservation that balances nutrient retention of Vitamin B and C with efficiency gains in terms of time, space, and energy, particularly for smaller organizations. Through trials at home and scholarly research, I researched various methods of food preservation, namely dehydration, canning, and freezing. While at City Fruit, I encountered challenges integrating preservation with gleaning organizations, primarily stemming from time and space constraints during the harvest season. Consequently, from the study results, it became evident that smaller organizations should adopt a mix of canning and freezing methods for preservation, and dehydration was not a viable option due to health and safety laws. Food preservation can benefit the public and environmental health communities by increasing food security in food banks and reducing food waste during harvest season. Preservation also contributes to cost-efficiency and nutrient retention while supporting sustainable, community-driven initiatives.