

## 'Preserving locally grown food'

Preserving food in season and locally has many personal benefits that can help to make it a sustainable practice for our environment. People who buy local food are reducing food miles. 'Food miles refers to the distance a particular food has clocked up on its journey to your shopping basket' (Ethical Shopper, Niki Bezzant). You are not travelling a further distance to the supermarket and saving money in fuel which means less greenhouse gas going into the environment.

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Preserving food has benefits and limitations economically, environmentally and socially. First knowing the source of your food makes you happy and makes you feel good about eating the product. Local food is better for you as it is fresher than processed food and has less sprays or chemicals. Also using local, seasonally available ingredients minimises energy used in food production, transport and storage. Preserving food has its limitations as many people can be facing challenges with equipment, sourcing local fresh ingredients and even time may be a factor.

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On a personal level, time may be a factor especially if one's lifestyle is very busy. Preserving and sourcing food requires hard work and a lot of hours need to be put in. More and more people work nowadays meaning their lifestyle is very busy, especially if families have children or other commitments. People with busy lifestyles may not have enough time to start preparing food to preserve.

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Home preservation saves a lot of money for people. However this has to be considered over the whole year, as the savings may not be noticeable until the preserved produce is out of season. During the off peak season the cost of the produce becomes very expensive. Buying fruits and vegetables at a lower price when the produce is plentiful and in season would save people heaps of money. For example, buying strawberries in season – at the market you can get an ice cream container of strawberries suitable for jam making for about \$3 or you can pay double that for frozen berries at the supermarket all year round including out of season. The cost of lettuce doubles during the winter time when out of season.

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The cost of equipment and supplies for food preservation may be expensive. Cheap equipment may have to be replaced all the time. If expensive equipment is purchased then it would be more effective because it would last for a longer period. For example, using glass jars instead of plastic ones which are difficult to sterilise and reuse. This can affect families on a personal level as they may be living on a low income and probably have a set weekly budget, which means they may not be able to purchase equipment and produce after they have spent money on their household e.g. mortgage/rent, food, power, water etc. Therefore it is better to save up and buy expensive, effective supplies that will last a longer period or find some recycled containers.

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Plastic jars cannot be recycled because they take years to decompose. Plastic jars are cheap therefore easy to afford but plastic causes pollution because when it is thrown away, it is bad for the environment. 'Each year, an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide. That comes out to over one million per minute. Billions end up as litter each year or in landfills.' That plastic that is ending up in our landfills is bad for the environment because plastic is made from petroleum, which is a non-renewable resource

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and a major contributor to global warming. Therefore people should use glass jars and containers when storing preserved food as glass is recyclable and is not bad for the environment.

While the time it takes to preserve food is considerable, economically preserving food is good money wise. One of the best ways to save money is to eat seasonally. Food in season is fresher and cheaper. It does not matter if you have a garden full of veggies, shop at your local farmers market or just find a great sale at your local grocery store. You can still preserve some amazing food for the winter. If people source food locally, they would save money on the cost of petrol as they do not have to travel several miles to purchase food. As well as saving money on petrol, you also help to save the environment by decreasing gas emission.

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Sourcing local food also helps maintain the vitamins and minerals in our food as these are gradually lost during long transportation. This means that people are not only buying locally but also looking after their well-being

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