



**NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR  
AG EXTENSION**

**Grant projects improve  
human, environment, and  
community health.**



PUBLISHED BY

**EXTENSION**  
FOUNDATION

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

# Welcome.

**“Community Is Our Jam” is a publication of the New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) program.** This publication celebrates the accomplishments of a team at Extension professionals from University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources that received funding for this project in 2022-2023.

NTAE is a grant program generously supported by the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and administered through a partnership between Oklahoma State University and the Extension Foundation (EXF). The primary objective of NTAE is to provide financial assistance to competitively selected Extension programs that align with the strategic goal and priority program areas of the USDA and the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP). Through this support, NTAE helps teams catalyze, accelerate, and expand their work in their respective fields.

Since its inception in 2019, the NTAE program has successfully funded and supported a total of 72 projects and leaders. This includes collaborations with all Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) and ECOP Program Action Teams (PATs).

Selected programs receive support for a period of one year. The project leader and their team are provided with invaluable mentoring from a team of catalysts, key informants, and coaches from the EXF. This customized and innovative support model assists teams in exploring new possibilities, enhancing the intended impact of their projects, and sharing their work with a national audience. Additionally, each team receives additional resources and support to create materials and experiences that speed the development of their projects and bring about desired changes.

The project showcased in this publication reflects the diversity and breadth of Extension disciplinary work and programming. In this publication, you will gain deeper insights into this exciting project, including the lessons learned, the project’s significance for Extension in a broader context, and what lies ahead for the team.

We are thrilled to share the remarkable work featured in this publication with you.

Sincerely,

**Beverly Coberly, Ph.D.**

*Chief Executive Officer (Interim)*

**Ashley Griffin, MS**

*Chief Operating Officer (Interim)*

## EXTENSION FOUNDATION

### PUBLICATIONS

#### Editorial Staff

Julie Halverson  
Rose Hayden-Smith  
Heather Martin

#### Design & Production

Ellen P. Krugel  
Heather Martin

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Citations for this publication may be made using the following:  
Kansas City: Extension Foundation (2022). *Community is Our Jam* (1st ed). ISBN: 978-1-955687-36-2.

This work, ISBN 978-1-955687-36-2, is supported by New Technologies for Agriculture Extension grant no. 2020-41595-30123 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

#### Website

[extension.org](https://extension.org)

#### Contact

Bryan Cave LLP  
One Kansas City Place  
1200 Main Street, Suite 3800  
Kansas City, MO 64105-212

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA Agriculture and Natural Resources

### PROJECT TEAM

#### **Amira Resnick, MPA**

*Statewide Director, Community Nutrition and Health, University of California ANR-Cooperative Extension*

#### **Dorina Espinoza, Ph.D.**

*Youth, Family and Communities Advisor, University of California ANR-Cooperative Extension*

#### **Russell Hill, MPA**

*4-H Youth Development Advisor, University of California ANR-Cooperative Extension*

#### **Tunyalee Martin, Ph.D.**

*Associate Director of Communications-UC Integrated Pest Management Program, University of California*

#### **Fe Moncloa, Ph.D.**

*4-H Youth Development Advisor, University of California ANR-Cooperative Extension*

#### **Sue Mosbacher**

*UC Master Food Preserver Program Coordinator, University of California ANR-Cooperative Extension*

#### **Katherine Soule, Ph.D.**

*Youth, Families and Communities Advisor, University of California ANR-Cooperative Extension*

#### **Liliana Vega, MS**

*4-H Youth Development Advisor, University of California ANR-Cooperative Extension*

## 4 WAYS TO USE THIS PUBLICATION.

### 1. BE INSPIRED.

Follow our model to contribute to broader public health efforts by expanding and diversifying your program reach.

### 2. ADVOCATE.

Show this publication to your Extension Director and talk about how to use it to enhance your Extension’s public outreach.

### 3. SHARE.

Share this publication with potential community partners who could help you create new programming.

### 4. GIVE FEEDBACK.

Did this publication inform your Extension work? Share what you’ve learned with us by emailing: [contact-us@extension.org](mailto:contact-us@extension.org).

# community is our jam

FOOD PRESERVATION PROGRAM

INCREASES FOOD SECURITY, IMPROVES PUBLIC HEALTH,

BUILDS CULTURAL COMPETENCY

**C**ooperative Extension programs address multiple issues in many communities. University of California Master Food Preserver (UC MFP), a program from the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR), is addressing the complex relationships among food safety, food insecurity, food waste, and health equity.

This program is particularly relevant in California, where one out of every 10 residents experiences food insecurity, with an even higher rate among children (one in seven faces hunger). Through virtual and in-person workshops, participants learn about reducing food waste and about safe food storage, preparation, and preservation methods such as freezing, dehydrating, canning, pickling, and fermenting. Because California is among the nation's most racially and ethnically diverse states, the UC MFP team also is exploring ways to build relationships with communities often not represented in the MFP program. Using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment (see sidebar), from the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) Framework for Health Equity, the team trains staff and volunteers to increase their cultural competency.

Amira Resnick, statewide director of Community Nutrition and Health UC ANR, leads the team that received a New Technologies in Ag Extension (NTAE) grant for MFP. In this Q&A, she talks about how the project—one of five 2023 NTA projects related to food—is evolving and how NTAE support helped the team advance their work.

### How have you broadened your program's audience and impact?

We are a volunteer-driven community education program. We want to inspire all Californians to enjoy local, healthy food; reduce food waste; and increase food security by promoting culturally appropriate, research-based practices

to safely preserve food at home. To achieve these goals, we're partnering with other Extension programs in our state to expand our reach with residents we may otherwise not be in relationship with. The Extension programs we collaborate with most are UC Master Gardener Program, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, 4-H, and CalFresh Healthy Living, UC (a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP Ed) program).

While our primary purpose is food safety, UC MFP is evolving to be more aligned with public health frameworks and goals. ECOP's Health Equity Framework is a great starting place, helping our stakeholders connect more intentionally with audiences in historically underserved and low-income communities.

**~40%** of U.S. food supply ends up in landfills  
*(USDA)*

**20%** of edible food waste in California must be recovered by 2025 *(CA law)*



### How did the NTAE team and the Extension Foundation support your work?

We took advantage of the Key Informant support.

Our UC ANR structure is complex: We have local, statewide, special project teams, and ongoing program teams. Staying fresh and forward-thinking with our collaboration skills feels essential. Karl Bradley, the Extension Foundation's leadership specialist, helped us with team building and leadership development. In a strategic planning training session for our team, he invited us to envision the celebration we

wanted to have in the near future—which helped us work backwards and think through the steps required to get to that celebration. Each participant had a different version of what we wanted to celebrate, which highlighted the importance of planning our work together.

Julie Halverson, the foundation's evaluation specialist, filled a gap for our team, as we didn't have staff dedicated to program evaluation. Julie provided ideas about methodology and helped us think through short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes. ➤



Community volunteers and a Master Food Preserver volunteer

### Can you tell us a bit about the program's work in food banks?

UC MFP began working more frequently with food banks in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Every month, our staff and volunteers provide food bank clients with relevant recipes and share techniques for preserving food that might otherwise spoil and end up in the landfill.

### How does the program appeal to culturally diverse audiences?

One of our nutrition education program supervisors in San Diego County acquired local funding to bring UC MFP techniques to Spanish-speaking participants in her nutrition education program. She saw an opportunity to offer new and relevant content to this group and leverage their interest and desire to learn together. In San Bernardino County, the UC MFP team provided two workshops for parents as part of a project that reaches Hispanic/Latino communities. Each workshop emphasized food safety, food storage techniques, sanitation, and handwashing. The first workshop, "Refrigerator Pickling," included a live demonstration that walked parents through the process. They were given a kit with carrots, jalapenos, garlic, pickling salt and spices, a container, a bottle of vinegar, and the recipe to take home to create either a sweet or salty dish. All the promo-

**"I was pleased to work with and mentor Amira through this process. She learned to access her state's Extension assets and quickly modify her original plan to accommodate those assets and her audience's needs."**

—Fred Schlute, NTAE catalyst

tional materials created for these classes were created in English and Spanish. In all of the communities and counties where we have UC MFP, we are serving the public and positioned to advance multiple complex public health topics, as well as the diverse cultural traditions and sheer enjoyment of preserving food. When it comes to fermenting cabbage, for example, we need to be as adept and authentic in teaching kimchi as we are in teaching sauerkraut. By building a volunteer base that is representative of the cultural diversity of our communities, and supporting our staff to adapt effectively in working across cultures, we'll continue to grow our appeal, our reach, and our impact across California.

### What could other Extension teams learn from you?

I hope our work inspires others to consider how they can contribute to broader public health efforts by expanding and diversifying their program reach. I have three suggestions:

- Pay attention to how this effort might connect to any existing strategic plans, core values, or condition change statements you have in your Extension organization.
- Communicate and reiterate how staff skill-building (and measuring skill development) is essential to achieving program goals and having the intended community impact.
- Meet people where they are. Provide a variety of experiences and learning opportunities for teammates to engage in new topics. Leverage your early-adopters to build momentum for positive change and create on-ramps for those who become ready at any moment along the way.

### What does the future hold for your work?

As our staff and volunteers grow and evolve, so does our program. We are learning and adapting to working across cultures, while striving to reflect and respond to the diversity of our state and to the inequities that affect our communities.

The UC ANR Community Health and Nutrition unit is building a strategy for community nutrition and health and looking for opportunities to be more visible in our Extension community and beyond. In spring 2023, we hosted a webinar series on health equity for colleagues across the division. We are participating in more public health spaces and positioning ourselves to bridge education, workforce development, public health, food systems, health care, and more. We're connecting with the Western region network, learning more about intersections of physical health and social-emotional health and hope to learn more about approaches that other states are taking to build Extension work in these broadened health and equity areas. ■



### THE IDI ASSESSMENT

provides individuals a score across a continuum of intercultural development, with examples and descriptions that allow them to visualize their tendencies and the impacts of their actions. Each person also receives an intercultural development plan to guide their growth and learning.

The MFP team has provided intercultural development training to nearly 30 staff and volunteers, and 22 of them having taken the IDI assessment, debriefing their results and participating in small Learning Circles to advance their intercultural development skills. This effort is also increasing awareness and helping the MFP team identify barriers to participation in the program.