

# Marshallese Food Preservation Projects



Household Nutrition Education Program  
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The information presented in this booklet was designed to accompany demonstration workshops presented by those with knowledge of Marshallese food preservation techniques. It is advisable to contact the programs listed in the back of this booklet for additional information if you are unfamiliar with these techniques.

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This book is intended for use by school teachers, nutrition & health educators and students to promote local food preservation methods, the RMI food & nutrition and food safety guidelines. We welcome anyone to use any part or all the information provided in this book as part of a class project or community nutrition and food safety education activity.

### **Introduction:**

*The Marshall Islands have been through such challenging times affecting the nutritional status of the Marshallese people: from natural disasters to World War II to nuclear bomb testing "for the good of mankind", to the introduction of alcohol, tobacco, unhealthy new foods and the influence of unhealthy lifestyles. Our vulnerability and hospitality has resulted in rapid change, challenging our ability to adjust and cope, and gradually resulting in a slow loss of our traditional lifestyles, culture and livelihood. We've suffered from many unwanted and early deaths due to poor nutrition. Today we often say we are hungry because we don't have rice or flour. Today, we have to look hard and go far to get local foods. Today many don't grow local foods or go fishing, especially in the urban centers. Today our children prefer imported foods over our own local foods. Today many have forgotten our traditional food preparation methods or were never taught. We've become careless in handling and preparing foods.*

*Enough is enough. Our local and traditional lifestyles and food are the best for us Marshallese people. Food preparation has always been an important part of our traditional lifestyle. In particular preserving foods was always a community effort. We know that traditionally preserved foods are very nutritious and healthy for Marshallese people. Foods were preserved for long sea journeys, for cultural celebrations, important family occasions, and for food security. Although times are changing, we can continue to practice preserving our local foods by using modern equipment and imported ingredients to compliment local ingredients. We must continue to find ways to revive what has been taken away from us if we are to improve the nutritional status of Marshallese people.*

### ***Our Vision as a Community Nutrition Worker:***

*"We see a future for the Marshall Islands where there will be no hungry people. We see a future when local foods are available and easy to get anywhere on land and sea. We see a future when all Marshallese people believe that our own local foods are the best and everyone will work together to hang on to all the preparation methods passed down from our parents and grandparents. We see a future with skilled Marshallese people able to use modern technology to preserve and promote our local foods. We see a future with many healthy Marshallese people."*

We encourage all women to continue breastfeeding their children. Breastmilk only for the first six months then introduce local complimentary foods and continue breastfeeding up to 2 years and older.

## **Food and Nutrition Guidelines for the Marshall Islands**

(Developed in 1995 by the RMI Food & Nutrition Task Force)

- 1. *En lōñ kain mōña kwoj mōña aolep raan.***  
Eat a variety of foods every day. Try different local foods and recipes at every meal.  
Drink different kinds of fruit juices and enjoy a coconut drink.
- 2. *Kaninnini ajri ro nejum.***  
Breast-feed your children. Give them only breastmilk (no water) for the first 6 months and then continued breastfeeding until 2 or more years.
- 3. *Naajdrik ajri ro nejum mōña ko rekkar im reune.***  
Feed your children food good and healthy for them. Don't fill up their little stomachs with sweet foods.
- 4. *En dik am kojerbal juka im mōña mōña ko retōñal.***  
Use less sugar and eat less sweet foods.
- 5. *En dik am kojerbal jol im mōña mōña ko rejol.***  
Use less salt and eat less salty foods.
- 6. *En dik kojerbal kuriij im mōña ko elap kuriij ie.***  
Use less fat and eat less foods high in fat.
- 7. *En dik am kojerbal dennin kadok ak jab kojerbale.***  
Use and drink less or no alcohol.
- 8. *En lap am idaaak aiboj aolep raan.***  
Drink plenty of water each day.  
Make sure you drink boiled and safe drinking water.
- 9. *Kalet kamaolal ko ak mōña kotaan awa mōña ko rekkar ñan ejmour.***  
Choose healthy snack foods for your body.
- 10. *Kwon emmakitkit ak kejjimourur aolep raan.***  
Do more physical activity or movement every day.  
Enjoy a walk after you eat and not lie down and go to sleep.
- 11. *Idaaak elap aiboj aolep raan.***  
Drink plenty of clean water every day.
- 12. *Jab kobataat.***  
Don't smoke.



## **10 Golden Rules in Making Food Safe in the Marshall Islands**

(Developed in 2002 by the Nutrition Unit of the Ministry of Health and WHO)

1. En mokaj am kojerbal mōña ko alikin wot komat. Jab kotlok bwe en to an mōña in pade ko bed alikin aer komat.  
*Cook and serve food hot. Don't let party foods sit too long.*
2. Mōña ko rekkar bwe ren molo rej aikuj bed ilo molo einwot sandwich ko im ewor maonej ie. Jab likit mōña kein ijoko rej dōte im jab molo.  
*Cold food should be kept cold, like sandwiches and foods with mayonnaise. Do not place them in a sunny spot or at room temperature.*
3. Bobrae jen an kij ko ajedeed. Kejnolok mōña ko rej amij jen mōña ko emoj komati. Kojerbal juon rā in mwijmwij ñan kanniek im juon rā ñan leen wojke im bilawa ko.  
*Avoid cross-contamination. Separate raw foods from cooked food. Use one cutting board for chopping meats, poultry and fish and one cutting board for chopping fruits, vegetables and breads.*
4. Kwon lukun kejbarok am komman mōña ko rej amij einwot jajimi im en mokaj am kojerbale.  
*Prepare raw food such as sashimi with extra care and serve fresh.*
5. Jalele ko ren lukun komat ñan ñe kwojjab lo botoktok. Jab mōña kanniek ilo aer amij einwot kao, bao im laptata lul.  
*Cook food thoroughly until no blood is seen. Do not eat raw meats and poultry especially turkey tail.*
6. Bobrae loñ, kulul im kijdik. Ejjab aikuj wor ilo jikin komman mōña ko. En erre jikin mōña eo aolep iien.  
*Control flies, cockroaches and rats. They have no place in eating-places. Keep eating-places clean all the time.*
7. Lolorjake bwe pā ko ren erre mokta jen mōña im kepooj mōña. Jab jibwe kin peim mōña ko ededelok aer komat.  
*Keep hands clean before eating and preparing foods. Keep hands away from cooked and ready-to-serve foods.*
8. Lolorjake bwe jikin komat im kein komat ko ren erre im jab kijkij. Kwoj jolok aer kijkij ilo am kojerbal den bwil ak jerajko. Jab ilik jerajko ilo den in joop eo am ak kwon ilik jerajko ilo den in karreo eo.  
*Keep food preparation area and equipment clean and sanitized. Disinfect with hot water or with bleach. Do not add bleach to dishwashing water. Put bleach in rinse water.*



9. Kojerbal den ko rerreo im tiljek ñan idaaak im komat.  
*Use safe water for drinking and cooking.*
10. En jejjet jikin mōña ko. Mōña ko re-mōra einwot rajj im bilawa rej aikuj bed ilo nien mōña ko ekon mejeir. Kanniek ko einwot kao, bao im ek rej aikuj bed ilo freezer. Lep, milik im maionej rej aikuj bed ilo aijbok eo emolo.  
*Store food properly. Dry foods like rice and flour should be kept in sealed containers. Meats, poultry and fish should be kept in freezer. Eggs, milk and mayonnaise should be kept in a cold refrigerator.*

## FOOD SAFETY CHAIN

KEEP FOOD FRESH	—————▶	KAAL
KEEP FOOD CLEAN	—————▶	ERREO
HANDLE WITH CARE	—————▶	TILJEK
SERVE RIGHT AWAY	—————▶	MOKAJ

## Watch out for bad foods



Canned foods that are dented, swollen, or rusty.



Uncovered foods with flies flying on it.



Expired foods.

**Photos reproduced with permission from SPC's Video  
 "Food Is Precious - Take Care of It"**





## Practice good personal hygiene when handling food:

1. Kwol peim kin joop im den erreo mokta jen am jōbjōb mōña.  
Wash your hands with soap and clean water before handling any food.
2. Kwol peim kin joop im den erreo alikin am kojerbal em jidik eo.  
Wash your hands with soap and clean water after using toilet.
3. Kojerbal pepa tool ñan komoraik peim.  
Use paper towels to dry your hands.
4. Lolorjake bwe akiin peim en kadu im erreo.  
Keep your finger nails short and clean.
5. Jolok kaburōrō jen akiin peim.  
Remove nail polish.
6. Jolok riiñ ko jen peim.  
Remove all jewelry (rings) from your hands.
7. Kojerbal nuknuk erreo ak apron erreo aolep iien.  
Wear clean clothes or a clean apron all the time.
8. En kon kolan boram.  
Keep your hair neat and away from your face.
9. Ñe kwonañinmej einwot mejiin, jab jōbjōb ak komman mōña.  
If you are sick especially if you have a cold/flu, do not handle food.
10. Kojerbal juuj ak jodi ko erreo iloaan jikin komman mōña eo.  
Wear clean shoes and slippers in food preparation areas.
11. Kwon tutu aolep raan mokta im alikin am komman mōña.  
Take a shower everyday before and after you handle food.
12. Jab edijoñ mōña ko kin jupuun in iok ak serve ko.  
Don't taste the food with the mixing and serving utensil.



## Kwopojak kio ñan am jinoe komman mōña.

### What is Food Preservation:

#### Why do we preserve food in the Marshall Islands?

1. So we can always have something to eat.
2. To make them last longer.
3. For cultural obligations to our traditional leaders.
4. To take with us when we go on long journeys by land and sea.
5. To send to our relatives overseas.
6. To enjoy during special family functions like weddings, birthdays, funerals, farewells and other family gatherings.
7. To present as gifts to people who visit our islands and our homes.
8. So we can sell them to make money for the family.

#### How do we preserve food in the Marshall Islands?

1. Growing a food garden and only taking what we need for that day.
2. Fishing and harvesting only what we need for that day.
3. Raising pigs and chickens for use when needed.
4. Drying food under the sun.
5. Drying food using modern equipment like electrical oven & food dryer.
6. Fermenting breadfruit (Bwiro).
7. Salting fish (Ek jol).
8. Smoking fish (Ek manaknak/atiti).
9. Using vinegar for making pickled papaya and vegetables.
10. Using sugar to make fruit jam.



*It takes a community to prepare  
Marshallese food successfully.*



Collecting firewood.



Collecting coral rocks.



Collecting coconut husks.



Laying coconut husks out to dry.



Gathering the food.

Group activity: Tomorrow, we will make chicken soup. Everyone needs to bring something. What do we need to make a healthy soup?



## Dried Breadfruit Roll “MA JENKUN”



Photos courtesy of Dr. Lois Englberger, PhD

This Jenkun is made from a breadfruit called “Mejwaan or ma kole” (*artocarpus mariannensis*). This type of breadfruit can be eaten raw when ripe. It has nuts that can be boiled and eaten. The nuts are excellent sources of protein for good growth. The Mejwaan is naturally sweet and full of nutrients. The Mejwaan is an excellent source of Vitamin A to make eyes healthy and strengthens our immune system (keeps our bodies healthy against illnesses).

The Mejwaan breadfruit tree covered the island of Majuro at one time but due to an increased population over the years, many of the Mejwaan trees have been removed. Today, not many people pay much attention to the nutritional value of the Mejwaan breadfruit. The fruit is left to fall and rot on the ground.

We hope this book will help to promote the importance of this type of breadfruit and teach others a preparation and preservation method for family consumption or for income generating purposes. The dried breadfruit makes an excellent snack and can be stored for a long period of time and use when needed.

Step 4. Spread the breadfruit and breadfruit  
banana leaves and only remove the top 1/4

## How to make Dried Breadfruit Roll "MA JENKUN"

*Prepared by Mieke Langmos, Rosinā Lucky, Calinta Latdrik, and Sandy Lakabung and Laiso Jitiam.*

### STEP 1: What do you need checklist.

- \* 15-20 ripe "mejwaan" breadfruit
- \* Clam shells (jukwe) for peeling
- \* A basin or food container to put the peeled breadfruit in.
- \* Green banana leaves to wrap the breadfruit in.
- \* Coconut leaves to weave around the wrapped breadfruit.
- \* Shovel and coconut shells to dig a pit for your earth oven 'um'. You will also need the shovel to handle hot rocks and to cover the 'um' with soil.
- \* Firewood
- \* Dried coconut husks
- \* Matches
- \* Coral rocks (1 coconut sac full)
- \* 2-3 coconut sacs to cover the earth oven
- \* Breadfruit and banana leaves to cover the earth oven
- \* A piece of plywood to place your cooked breadfruit on after removing from earth oven.
- \* A bowl to place your cooked breadfruit nuts in.
- \* A bowl for your cooked breadfruit after separating from breadfruit nuts.
- \* 3-4 baking pans or cookie sheets.
- \* When ready to eat, you will need a knife and cutting board to slice up the roll into pieces.
- \* A tray to display your finished product.
- \* Pieces of mature coconut 'waini' to eat with your breadfruit.
- \* Dried salted fish to eat with your breadfruit.
- \* Sealed container to store your breadfruit pieces.
- \* Reclosable sandwich bags to sell your breadfruit pieces.



Step 1: Pick ripe breadfruit from tree and let ripen for three or four days before you start.



Step 2: When breadfruit has ripened for 3-4 days, peel off the skin by scraping with clam shells and place in a pot or basin.



Step 3: Prepare the "UM" (earth oven)



Step 4: Spread the breadfruit and breadfruit nuts in banana leaves and only remove the core "AR".



Step 5: Cover with another banana leaf and weave inside coconut leaves.

Step 6: (a) When "UM" is hot and ready, (b) put wrapped breadfruit on top of hot rocks and cover with hot rocks, than (c) cover with banana leaves and (d) breadfruit leaves and (e) coconut sacs and (f) soil. Let the breadfruit cook all day.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

Step 7: Just before the sunset, remove the breadfruit from the 'um'. Be very careful, the 'um' will be very hot. Remove one layer at a time.



Step 8: Place cooked breadfruit on a piece of plywood and let it cool before handling it. When cool enough to handle, separate the nuts from the breadfruit. The breadfruit will be soft if well cooked.







Step 9: Spread the breadfruit in baking pans or cookie sheets.



Step 10: Lay the breadfruit out in the sun to dry for one week or until dry. You can also bake in electrical oven on low heat several times until dry.



If drying under the sun, make sure you cover with a screen to keep the flies and chickens away and place in high places to keep dogs, pigs and people away.



Step 11: When dry, the jenkun should be brown in color. Slice up into pieces and serve with fresh mature coconut and dried salted fish. Can be stored in sealed containers and eaten anytime.



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This is a more traditional way of storing it. Rolled and wrapped in dried pandanus leaves. This food preservation method is also used to preserve the pandanus "makwon". When you see something like this sold in the community, buy one and enjoy it for a long time.



## How to make TARO FLOUR "Iaraj pouta"

Prepared by Melani Jacob, Anji Bujen, Tenitha Mejbon, Milan Edward and Pauline Zackios.

### Step 1: what do you need checklist.

As many taro roots as you want.

A long sharp stick to harvest your taro.

Knife to cut off the taro root and for peeling.

Clean water to wash the peeled taro. A piece of dried coconut husk for scrubbing.

A bowl or basin for grating the taro into.

A grater.

A place to lay out your grated taro to dry for several days.

An empty plastic rice bag or sealed container to store your dried taro flour.

Or seal in freezer bags and sell.



Step 2: Get the taro from the taro patch.



Step 3: Cut off the taro root and peel off the skin.



Step 4: Clean taro by scrubbing with a piece of dried coconut husk.



Step 5: Grate taro.



Step 6: Spread out your grated taro under the sun to dry. This may take 3-7 days. While drying keep it covered with a screen to keep flies and chickens away. Dry in high places away from dogs, pigs, and people.



When dry it will become like flour or powder. Store in a sealed container or empty rice bag and use as needed.

Ebon atoll is well known for the different varieties of taro and for producing such a product. The dried taro flour can be stored for a long time. You can use the taro flour to make baby food, taro pudding, taro cake and taro bread.

## How to make TARO PUDDING from TARO FLOUR



### Step 1: what do you need checklist.

- 1 bowl or container of clean water to soak taro flour in.
- 1 bowl to transfer the soaked taro to.
- Prepare your fire: firewood, dried coconut husks, matches.
- Iron screen to place over the fire and place your pot.
- 1 cooking pot.
- Spear to husk coconut.
- Coconut grater 'raanke'.
- 1 bowl for your grated coconut.
- Clean cooking water.
- 1 box of corn starch.
- 1 bag of sugar.
- Long mixing spoon.
- 1 bowl to mix corn starch with water.
- 1 bowl for coconut milk.
- Grated coconut shells to serve your taro pudding in.



Step: 2 Soak dried taro in water over night.



Step: 3 Next day, squeeze out water from taro.



Whatever you don't use, you can lay out under the sun to re-dry. Try and avoid doing this for it will decrease the nutritional value of the flour.



Step 4: Prepare your fire. Cooking the taro pudding over an open fire gives it a unique and delicious taste vs. cooking on a modern stove.



Step 5: Place your pot of water (1/2 full) on fire to boil.



Step 6: Husk your coconuts



Step 7: grate three coconuts and prepare your coconut milk



Step 8: In a bowl, mix your dried taro with water and about 1/2 a bag of sugar, then add to your boiling water and continue to stir to avoid the taro sticking to the bottom of the pot.



Step 9: Add coconut cream to the pot and continue to stir. Tenitha demonstrates how to use a dried coconut husk to filter the coconut milk.



Step 10: In a bowl mix 1/2 a box of corn starch with water then add to the pot. Allow the taro to cook a few more minutes and add in more sugar or coconut milk or corn starch if needed.

Serve taro pudding in a grated coconut shell.



MMMMM.....DELICIOUS...."ENNO"



*Milan, Tenitha, Pauline, Anji and Melani*



## How to make Babea's Home-made Smoker

Prepared by Babea Milne

### Step 1: what do you need checklist.

- 1 empty tin of cabin biscuit.
- 1 knife to remove the rim of the tin.
- Sandpaper if needed to remove the rust from the tin.
- Clean water to clean the tin.
- 2 small iron bars.
- A piece of iron screen to fit into the tin.



Step 2: Find an empty tin of biscuit and cut off the rims.



Step 3: Scrape off any rust and wash and clean tin thoroughly.



Step 4: Poke holes on the bottom side of tin to allow smoke to enter.



Step 5: Make two parallel holes on each side of the tin for iron bars.



Step 6: Insert iron bars.



Step 7: Place iron screen on iron bars.

## **How to cook Smoked Fish "Ek Manaknak", Babea style**

*Prepared by Babea Milne, Johnston Latdrik, Kinja Lamdrik and Carlden Jormeah*



### **What do you need?**

- Prepare your fire: dried coconut husks, firewood and matches.
- Fish (for this demonstration, two pieces of reef fish were used).
- Salt.
- Clean water for cleaning fish.
- Knife.
- A tray to place your cooked fish in.



Step 8: Place tin on fire and use dried coconut husks to make a smoke.

### **Prepare your fish:**



Step 9:  
Scale your fish.



Step 10:  
Gut your fish  
and remove  
gills and wash  
thoroughly.



Step 11:  
Cut the fish  
down the  
middle.



Step 12:  
Salt the fish  
for some  
flavor or use  
spices of  
your choice.



Step 13: Place fish in homemade smoker and let it cook. It may take from 1 - 5 hours depending on the strength of the fire and smoke.



Step 14: Continue to monitor fish and flip over to cook other side.



**Serve and enjoy with mature coconut 'waini'.**

## How to cook "Ma Kwonjin" (Grilled breadfruit)

Prepared by Kinja Lamdrik, Melani Jacob, Calinta Latdrik and son



### Step 1: what do you need checklist.

As many ripe breadfruits as you want.

Prepare your fire: firewood, dried coconut husks, coconut shells, coral rocks and matches.

Clam shells (jukwe) or pieces of broken glass to scrape breadfruit.

Sticks to continue to rotate breadfruit while cooking.

Empty coconut shells to help you hold breadfruit while scraping.

Open container to place your breadfruit.



Step 2: Prepare your open fire using firewood, dried coconut husks, and cover with coral rocks.



Step 3: When fire dies down, place breadfruit on open fire and continue to rotate until all sides are grilled. Depending on the strength of the fire, it may take 30 minutes to 1 hour for the breadfruit to cook right through.



Step 4: Remove breadfruit from fire and scrape off charcoal than place it back on fire to cook well. You can use a long toothpick or coconut needle to check if breadfruit is cooked. The coconut needle should come out clean. When breadfruit is cooked right through, remove each breadfruit from fire and scrape off charcoal. Use empty coconut shells to protect your hands while you scrape off charcoaled layer with a clam shell with sharp edges or piece of broken glass. Be careful in handling sharp broken glass.



Slice breadfruit and serve with family meal. Here's an example of a healthy meal consisting of a slice of breadfruit, one small reef fish, a slice of ripe papaya, two pieces of ripe banana and one drinking coconut.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Englberger, PhD

## How to make "Waini Jaam" coconut jam



Step 1: what do you need checklist.

Stove or fire

Frying pan or cooking pot

Coconut grater 'raanke'

Wooden spoon to stir with to avoid scratching your frying pan.

Measuring spoons

Measuring cups

Sealed containers to store your jam.

Labels to write down your product name and date cooked.

### Ingredients:

1-1/2 Cups coconut milk (depending on your taste, you can use pure coconut milk or add water to make coconut milk).

1 Cup brown sugar

1 Tablespoon cornstarch

Step 2: In a bowl, mix coconut milk with cornstarch.

Step 3: Pour coconut and cornstarch mixture into frying pan and add in brown sugar and continue to stir and cook over low heat for about 15-20 minutes or until it thickens. Jam will harden more when cooled.

Step 4: Use right away on bread or pancakes or pour while hot into sterilized bottles and containers. Sterilize containers and lids by boiling in water and allow to air dry. Avoid re-contaminating so your jam can stay long. Seal completely and label. Can be refrigerated and use when needed.



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