

# The Fight Against Food Insecurity: How Ancient Methods Might be the Answer.

## Introduction

Food insecurity affects 24.9% of New York households. In Franklin County food insecurity affects 21.3% of homes followed by St. Lawrence County at 12%. Given the severity of the problem, this research tries to find ways to help combat food insecurity in the North Country.

## Methods

This research was done by searching online for what is available to the public in Franklin County and St. Lawrence County. Next, I looked for programs available in other states that may be successful in the North Country. Third, I broadened the search to gain insight into techniques other countries might use to fight food insecurity. After compiling all the different ways that are being used to fight food insecurity, I assessed their potential utility in the North Country.

## Findings

Food pantries are available in most towns all over the North Country. These food pantries are open to the public at varying days/times to avoid conflict with patron's work schedules. There are community gardens in Malone (Franklin Co.) intended to help gain access to growing their fresh produce. Apparently, these gardens haven't fully been fully embraced. The same town also has the Mobile Farmers Market by JCEO but that is only in operation from June to September. This Mobile Farmers Market is meant to help those with mobility issues access fresh fruits and vegetables by bringing them to home. Unfortunately, community members must travel to a meet up spot to access the truck. Each year the DEC partners with the Venison Donation Correlation and Feeding New York State. This program helps the average hunter by providing a way that they could help feed those in need. Hunters can donate a deer to one of their cooperating processors and they will donate the meat to Feeding New York State food banks. I also wanted to see if there were classes to educate the communities who would benefit in the fight against the rapid food security in the area. Cornell Cooperative offers a variety of food related classes designed to help with food sovereignty. There is one class called *Seeds to Supper* that teaches people how to grow their own food and how to properly prepare meals with what they have grown. If you cannot make it in person, they have webinars available, so it is open to the masses. Another class that I found that could help those struggling with food insecurity would be their *Food Preservation* class.



Figure 1 Image of how New York pantries are serviced.



Figure 2 JCEO Mobile Farmers Market.

## Findings Cont.

In this class they teach beginners how to preserve their harvest or locally grown food. They have information on all preservation methods like canning, pickling, fermenting, drying, and freezing. After looking at the North Country, I searched for offerings in other states. In Vermont they also offer a venison donation system with their local food pantries. In rural Vermont and Maine there was study that shows, that since the pandemic, their communities learned to sustain from their own land. In those communities the rate of food insecurity has been at an all-time low. In Minnesota there is a program called DARTS that has a year-round mobile food pantry among other programs that help the elderly. DARTS delivers pre-made boxes in rural areas to those who struggle with mobility issues.



Figure 3 Darts program in action



Figure 4 One of the community gardens in the Growing Together Montana program

Montana has a program that collaborates with Montana State University which provides mini grants to communities that had master gardener volunteers to assist in establishing and maintaining gardens. In addition, this program provides nutrition education and lessons to prepare the donated produce. One noteworthy example is the Fort Peck Reservation. This community received a grant to purchase seeds, supplies, and amendments. They also received assistance to have their soil and water. The Fort Peck community gardens yielded 4,695 pounds of fresh food that supported hundreds of households. Lastly, I looked at how other countries handled the food insecurity. Some countries advocate for a greater reliance on traditional food preservation strategies.

## Testing

For thousands of years people around the world have used a variety of food preservation techniques to buffer against food insecurity. Some of the common practices include canning, drying, salting, and smoking. Cornell Cooperative's website provides a wealth of information related to traditional food preservation. I used this information to try my hand at preserving food. I used two techniques including fermentation and pickling.



Figure 5 First step of the Kimchi: Salting of the Cabbage



Figure 6 Making of the seasoning porridge



Figure 7 Every part of the Kimchi ready to be combined

## Testing cont.



Figure 8 Kimchi that when it was first jarred



Figure 9 The finished Kimchi ready to eat.



Figure 10 Preparing the pickles



Figure 11 Finished refrigerator pickles

## Conclusion

Findings from this study show that most states are trying to help people gain access to fresh, nutritious food by encouraging their communities to garden and/or live off the land. My experience making kimchi and refrigerator pickles revealed that the process was rather straight forward and easy to follow. By combining gardening and food preservation a person, family, or community could make the most of seasonally abundant resources by preserving them for the winter. I feel this may help people in the North Country cope with food injustices.

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