



Tennessee
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Featured Researcher | Janice Branson

(http://www.tntech.edu/files/research/Featured_Researchers/Branson.JPG) TTU agriculture professor teaches students to process home-grown produce safely and avoid contamination.

Summary:

As part of the agritourism concentration in the School of Agriculture, professor Janice Branson is introducing her students to growing produce on one of the university's farms and then teaching them how to make products, like salsas and other canned goods, out of what they grow.

Research procedure, findings:

"in my classes, we would talk about the things like what they raised on their farms and what they did with it and I'm seeing that a lot more students don't have that knowledge anymore. This is one way of giving back knowledge that I have to the generation that's coming in."

Research application:

"These classes will help the students learn how to choose their produce or how to grow produce safely. We want our students to go out of here knowing how to safely raise their own food. Also, once they get the vegetables in and harvested them, we're teaching them how to actually process them for long-term storage or fresh eating."

Funding:

A higher education challenge grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture

What motivated you to create this program?

Most of the agritourism programs across the state concentrate on business management or publicity, without much of a focus on food safety.

"Since we've had so many contamination problems in the food industry, we decided we would put this set of courses together to concentrate on the food safety aspects of agritourism."

What are your future plans for the project?

"We hope to have a workshop type of operation where high school agriculture and vocational teachers will come in and our students will teach them how to process what they produce, like today we're making salsa. That way, our students learn and then they get to pass that on to others who will be able to take that back and pass that on to their students."

How is the project integrated into the classroom?

"We put together three courses, one for spring, one for summer and another for fall. We follow the typical types or products that you would produce on a farm for that season."

What have been the biggest challenges you've faced?

"We had a brand new section of land that has not been used for any type of row crop production. It was pasture for sheep and the ground was pretty hard from where the animals had walked over it constantly for years. We weren't able to get herbicide on the land before we had to put the crops in, so we've had a real problem with weeds. Raccoons have been getting into the corn. These are thing things that every farmer has to deal with, so they're learning the same things that a farmer is going to have to deal with."

What is your dream project?



"I would like to have a demonstration farm where people could come and our students could get actual experience with a lot of different aspects of farming, not just the plants and the animals but the soils as well. A place where the public can come in and they can see how these things are raised, what they actually look like out in the field. So many people think that corn comes out of a can or it comes out of the grocery store. They don't realize what it actually looks like, growing out there in the field."

*Last edited **2014.08.15** by **unknown**.*