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Freezing Foods



Freezing is one of the simplest and quickest methods of preserving foods. The process involves slowing down the chemical changes that affect the quality or spoilage of foods. By following these directions you can enjoy high quality, nutritious frozen food.

Freezing Vegetables

- Select fresh, tender vegetables. Freezing cannot improve quality.
- If vegetables cannot be frozen immediately, refrigerate them.
- Thoroughly wash and drain vegetables. Solid vegetables can be scrubbed with a brush or cloth. Rinse small quantities at one time using several changes of cold water. Do not let vegetables soak in the water.



Blanching is necessary for almost all vegetables that will be frozen. Blanching times vary for each vegetable. Follow directions from research-tested recipes to ensure a quality product.

- **Water blanching** – Use 1 gallon of water per pound of prepared vegetables. Put the vegetables in a blanching basket or metal strainer and lower into a large pot of rapidly boiling water. Cover. Wait for water to return to boiling. Start counting blanching time when water returns to a full boil. It should take only a minute to come back to a boil. If it takes longer, too many vegetables have been added to the boiling water.
- **Steam blanching** – To steam, use a pot with a tight lid and a basket that holds the food at least 3 inches above the bottom of the pot. Put 1 to 2 inches of water in the pot and bring it to boiling. Place vegetables in the basket in a single layer, put the basket in the pot, cover and keep on high heat. Start counting steaming time as soon as the lid is on.

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Cooling – As soon as the water or steam blanching is complete, place vegetables in ice-cold water. Change water often or use cold running water or water with ice in it. Cooling vegetables should take the same amount of time that you blanched them. Drain vegetables very well and carefully pat dry, then pack vegetables into containers or freezer bags, removing as much air as possible. Allow for ½ inch headspace.

A few vegetables – such as raw tomatoes, fresh herbs, green onions and peppers – do not require blanching before freezing.

Freezing Fruits

- Select fresh, firm-ripe fruits. Freezing cannot improve quality.
- If fruits cannot be frozen immediately, refrigerate them.
- Thoroughly rinse and drain fruits. Solid fruits can be scrubbed with a brush or cloth. Rinse small quantities at one time using several changes of cold water. Do not let fruit soak in the water.
- Do not use galvanized copper or iron equipment when preparing fruit. The acid in the fruit can react with the metals, contaminating the food.

Types of Packs

- **Syrup pack** – The type of syrup depends on the sweetness of the fruit to be frozen. The lighter syrups are recommended for mild-flavored fruits such as apples; heavier syrups may be needed for sour fruits such as

cranberries. Fruits frozen in syrup have better texture and flavor and hold their shape better when thawed than fruits without syrup.

To make syrup, dissolve sugar in lukewarm water, mixing until the solution is clear. Chill syrup before using. Place the fruit in a freezer container, and add just enough cold syrup to cover the prepared fruit (about ½ to ⅔ cup of syrup per pint). To keep fruit under the syrup, place a small piece of crumpled parchment paper or other water-resistant wrapping material on top, and press fruit down into the syrup before sealing the container.

- **Sugar pack** – Sprinkle sugar over the fruit and stir gently until the sugar is dissolved. This pack is good for sliced soft fruits, such as peaches, strawberries, grapes, plums and cherries.
- **Unsweetened** – Fruit can be packed dry, covered with water containing ascorbic acid or packed in unsweetened juice.
- **Tray pack** – This method is excellent for small whole fruits such as blueberries, raspberries and cranberries. Put the fruit in a single layer on a shallow tray, and put the tray in the freezer. Package the fruit after it is frozen. Because the fruit pieces are loose, you can remove small amounts and reseal the package.
- **Artificial sweetener pack** – Sugar substitutes may be used in place of sugar in the sugar pack. They can be added before freezing or just before serving. Equivalents for a standard amount of sugar vary with each brand of artificial sweetener. Use directions on the package to determine the amount of sweetener needed.

Syrups for Use in Freezing Fruits

Type of syrup	Percent sugar	Cups of sugar	Cups of water	Yield in cups
Very light	10	½	4	4 ½ cups
Light	20	1	4	4 ¾ cups
Medium	30	1 ¾	4	5 cups
Heavy	40	2 ¾	4	5 ⅓ cups
Very heavy	50	4	4	6 cups

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Whatever process you use to freeze foods, label each container with the name of the contents and the date. Proper packaging is essential to protect the flavor, color, moisture content and nutritive value of frozen foods.

Effective freezer packaging has the following characteristics:

- Moisture- and air-resistant.
- Strong and leak-proof.
- Resistant to oil and grease.
- Protects foods from absorption of off-flavors or odors.
- Easy to seal and write on.

Sources

Andress, Elizabeth, and Judy A. Harrison. 2006. So Easy to Preserve. Bulletin 989. Cooperative Extension, University of Georgia.

Complete Guide to Home Canning and Preserving (second edition). 1999. USDA agriculture information bulletin 539.

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