

Freezing your Produce



Prepared by Nancy Abra

Freezing is one of the simplest & least time-consuming ways to preserve foods at home. Freezing does not sterilize food, however the extreme cold simply retards the growth of micro-organisms and slows down changes that affect quality or cause spoilage in food. Properly frozen fruits and vegetables retain much of their flavour and nutritive value. Their texture may be somewhat softer than the garden fresh produce. Blanching vegetables (boiling for very short time) before freezing prevents the enzymes in foods from affecting the quality of the foods during storage. Do not blanch fruit, as it will become very mushy after defrosting.

Quick Facts

- ~ Freeze only fresh high quality fruit of proper maturity. Choose varieties recommended for freezing.
- ~ Freeze your produce promptly. Speed in preparing & packaging fresh produce from your garden or local grower is important to retain the flavour, colour & nutritive value of the produce.
- ~ Freeze only what you plan to eat in the next 8 to 12 months.
- ~ Use proper freezer bags or rigid container for packaging your produce for the freezer.
- ~ Label and date all packages.
- ~ Freeze your packages quickly. Do not let packages stand at room temperature before freezing.
- ~ Plan meals to use your items from the freezer daily, to have a complete yearly turnover.
- ~ Do not refreeze thawed foods. However, food that is still firm and have ice crystals can be put back in the freezer.
- ~ Be sure your freezer temperature **-18C**, remains steady and doesn't fluctuate in temperature, as that will adversely affect the quality of the food.

Freezing Fruits

Dry Pack: Pack fruits such as blueberries, raspberries, currants, strawberries and rhubarb without sugar or syrup. Drain washed & prepared fruit thoroughly on towels and fill containers or freezer bags. Seal, label & freeze. Fruits frozen this way can be used for jams, jellies, pies, desserts, smoothies or special diets.

Dry Sugar Pack: Sprinkle juicy fruits with the required amount of sugar or sugar substitute in a shallow bowl or tray. Mix gently, coating each piece of with sugar and spoon into leak proof containers, allowing for headspace so the fruit can expand when it freezes. Seal, label container and freeze.

Syrup Pack: Make syrup in advance, choosing the strength of syrup suited to tartness of fruit and personal taste. Recommended strengths are given in the table attached. Place prepared fruit in containers and cover with syrup, allowing for headspace. Seal, label and freeze.

Type of syrup (% syrup)	Sugar in cups	Water in cups	Approx. yield of syrup in cups	Calorie content per 2/3 cup
10	3/4	6 1/2	6 1/2	55
20	1 1/2	5 3/4	6 1/2	108
30	2 1/4	5 1/4	6 1/2	162
40	3 1/4	5	6 1/2	235

*Dissolve sugar in cold water not hot water. Syrup may be made the day before and kept covered in the refrigerator. Up to one fourth of the sugar may be replaced, amount for amount with corn syrup or honey.

To Prevent Discolouration of Fruits: Light coloured fruits, such as peaches, apricots, cherries & apples, will turn brown when exposed to air before completely frozen or while thawing in unopened package. To prevent this, powdered ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) is added to the fruit before freezing.

For syrup pack~ add ½ tsp of ascorbic acid for each litre of cold syrup and stir to dissolve. To use with dry sugar pack, mix ½ tsp ascorbic acid with 2 cups, which is approximately 450g or 1 lb of sugar.

Freezing Vegetables~

Blanching - Heat 2 gal /8 litres of water in each of 2 large pots, bringing them to a vigorous boil. Place approx. 1 lb of prepared vegetables in a wire basket or colander. Immerse in first pot of boiling water for 30 sec. Transfer immediately the basket/colander to the second pot; start to count blanching time when the water returns to a boil. For blanching times of various vegetables see the table below.

To chill- Cool blanched vegetables quickly in ice water or under cold running water. Remove as soon as vegetables are cold and drain on a clean bath towel placed on a shallow tray. Pack immediately in freezer bags or containers.

To pack – Select suitable size freezer bags that will hold 3 to 4 servings. Remove as much as possible filling the bag. Seal it with the closure or twist tie. Label kind and date. Put in freezer as soon as possible. Lay flat to freeze – will freeze faster and will not take up a large amount of room.

Preparation and blanch recommendations for commonly frozen vegetables.

Vegetables Young, tender, fresh, crisp	Preparation Wash, blanch, chill in ice water	Blanching Time In boiling water
Asparagus	Cut into desired lengths	2-4 min
Beans – green or yellow	Cut or leave whole	3 min
Broccoli	Peel stock, trim, split lengthwise	3 min
Cabbage	Cut into med or coarse shreds	2 min
Carrots	Peel, Cut into 1/4” slices	3 min
Cauliflower	1” flowerets soak for 30min in salt water (1 tbsp/5cups). Drain	3 min
Corn	Cut from cob	3 min
Peas - green	Shell, wash	2 min
Spinach/Chard etc	Wash well	2 min – drain well
Squash/Pumpkin	Peel, remove seeds, cut into 1” pieces. Cook until tender.	Cool. Mash, then pack into containers & freeze

Source ~ The all new Purity CookBook

Virginia Tech www.ext.vt.edu

Colorado State University Extension www.ext.colostate.edu