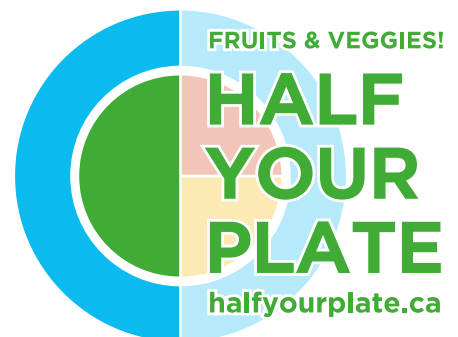




Home Freezing Guide for **Fresh Vegetables**

Freezing most vegetables at home is a fast, convenient way to preserve produce at its peak maturity and nutritional quality. We suggest grabbing - vegetables when they're available and most affordable and freezing for later enjoyment!

Freezing is not recommended for artichokes, endives, eggplant, lettuce greens, potatoes (other than mashed), radishes, sprouts and sweet potatoes.





Getting Started

Select the highest quality, young, tender vegetables that are perfectly ripe. Unsure what indicates ripeness? Take a look at the fruits and veggies section of halfyourplate.ca for detailed information.

WASH ALL VEGETABLES THOROUGHLY BEFORE BEGINNING PREPARATION AND FREEZE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER PREPARATION.

1 BLANCHING

Blanching vegetables before freezing (except onions and peppers), preserves their quality, by destroying the enzymes which during storage, can alter their colour, texture and flavour.

To blanch: bring water to a rolling boil in a large covered pot. Use 4 L (16 cups) of water for every 500 g (1 lb) of vegetables; use 8 L (32 cups) of water for leafy vegetables. Place clean, trimmed vegetables in a wire basket, lower gently into boiling water or add vegetables all at once to the boiling water. Stir. Cover and immediately begin to count blanching time. Keep heat on high to quickly return water to a boil. Blanch according to recommendations for each vegetable in the chart below – do not over or under blanch.

2 CHILLING


Once blanching is complete, remove from boiling water and immediately plunge food into ice-cold water to stop the cooking process. Drain vegetables to remove water (a salad spinner is ideal for this).

3 FREEZING

Place chilled vegetables in freezer containers/bags, remove excess air then freeze. For best results, freeze no more than 1.5kg (3 lb) at a time. Many vegetables can be frozen as individual pieces. Spread on a shallow pan, freeze until firm (1 hour), then pack in freezer containers. Vegetables store well frozen, for about 1 year.

4 THAWING

Most vegetables do not need to be thawed before cooking. However, corn-on-the-cob should be thawed slightly before cooking. If thawing is necessary, thaw vegetables in their sealed packages at room temperature. Since frozen vegetables have been blanched they require less cooking time than fresh vegetables.



Cooking Methods for Blanched Frozen Vegetables

Once ready to eat, cooking frozen vegetables is easy and convenient. Because veggies are blanched before frozen, they take a lot less time to cook!

1 BOILING

Use minimal amounts of water to cook frozen vegetables so as to retain best colour, flavour and nutrition. For each 500 ml (2 cups) container of vegetables, use 50 to 125 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) water and 2 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ tsp) salt, if desired. (Cook corn on the cob in enough boiling water to cover. Avoid salt when cooking corn as it toughens the kernels).

Bring water to the boil. Add vegetables, cover, and return to the boil. As soon as water returns to the boil, begin counting cooking time, reduce heat and simmer gently until vegetables are just tender. (See recommended times in chart below). Drain well before serving.

2 PAN FRYING

Use a bit of butter or other oil in a frying pan over medium heat, add frozen vegetables, season, cover and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until just tender.

3 BAKING

Frozen vegetables, such as carrots, parsnips, peppers and squash can be baked along with a roast or in a casserole. Alternatively, place frozen vegetables in a lightly greased baking dish, season, cover and then bake at 160° C (325° F) until tender. Stir occasionally.

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VEGETABLES	PREPARATION BEFORE FREEZING	BLANCHING TIME	COOKING METHOD & TIMES FOR BLANCHED, FROZEN VEGETABLES
Asparagus*	Wash thoroughly. Remove tough ends and sandy scales. Sort into uniform sizes. Leave whole or cut into 5 cm (2 inch) lengths.	Slender stalks - 2 min Medium stalks - 3 min Large stalks - 4 min	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Beans <i>green or wax</i>	Trim ends. Leave whole or cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces.	Whole - 4 minutes Cut - 3 minutes	Whole beans: Boil- 5 to 7 min. Cut beans: Boil - 4 to 6 min.
Beets	Remove tops leaving 2.5 cm (1 inch) stems. Cook until tender. Chill, peel, slice, and pack.	None	Thaw sliced beets for 30 min. to separate. Reheat - 9 to 10 min. or Bake - 90 min. at 160° C (325° F).
Beets Green	Remove tough stems and imperfect leaves.	2 minutes <i>Keeps for 6 months, frozen</i>	Boil - 1 to 2 min.
Broccoli*	Remove woody stems and cut into 3 cm (1 ½ inch) pieces.	Medium stalks - 3 min Large stalks - 4 min	Boil - 3 to 5 min
Brussels Sprouts*	Trim stems and outer leaves.	Small - 3 minutes Medium - 4minutes Large - 5 minutes	Boil - 4 to 6 min.
Cabbage	Trim outer leaves and core. Cut into wedges or shred coarsely.	Wedges - 2 minutes Shredded - 1 minute	Wedges: thaw 20 to 30 min; boil - 9 to 10 min. Shredded: thaw 2 hours; boil - 4 to 5 min.
Carrots	Remove tops, trim and scrape or peel. Leave small carrots whole. Cut large carrots into 1 cm (½ inch) cubes, slices or strips.	Whole - 5 minutes Cubes, slices or strips - 3 minutes	Boil for 6 to 8 min. for small whole carrots or bake for 75 min. at 160° C (325° F), break apart after 30 min.
Cauliflower*	Cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces.	3 minutes	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Celery	Trim and cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces.	3 minutes	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.
Corn <i>whole kernel</i>	Remove husks and silk.	4 minutes- Cut kernels from cob. Freeze on tray before packing.	Boil - 4 to 5 min.
Corn <i>on cob</i>	Remove husks and silk. Trim cobs to even lengths.	Small - 7 minutes Medium - 9 minutes Large - 11 minutes	Thaw 2 hours; boil - 3 to 5 min.
Fiddleheads	Leave whole.	2 minutes. Freeze on tray before packing.	Boil - 6 min.
Garlic	Peel outer skin.	Do not blanch. Freeze on tray before packing. <i>Keeps for 2 months.</i>	Thaw 20 min. Chop. Add to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.
Greens including beet greens, Swiss Chard, collards, kale, mustard greens, spinach, turnip greens	Remove tough stems and imperfect leaves. For chard, cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces or separate leafy parts from stalks and cut into 10 cm (4 inch) pieces.	Greens - 2 minutes Collards and stems - 3 minutes. <i>Keeps for 6 months.</i>	Boil - 1 to 2 min.

*To remove insects that may be present in broccoli, brussels sprouts or cauliflower, before blanching immerse prepared vegetables for 15 minutes in 1 L (4 cups) water containing 25 ml (1 Tbsp) salt. Rinse thoroughly. Blanch as directed.

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VEGETABLES	PREPARATION BEFORE FREEZING	BLANCHING TIME	COOKING METHOD & TIMES FOR BLANCHED, FROZEN VEGETABLES
Herbs	Chop or Slice.	Do not blanch. Freeze on tray before packing.	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.
Mushroom	Slice. Sauté 500 ml (2 cups) mushrooms in 30 ml (2 tbsp) butter or margarine for 4 min.	None	Reheat - 15 min.
Onions	Remove outer skin, root and stem ends and chop.	Do not blanch. Freeze on tray before packing.	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.
Parsnips	Remove stem and root ends, peel and cut in 2.5 cm (1 inch) fingers or 1 cm (½ inch) slices.	1 minute	Boil - 7 to 8 min. Or Bake - 45 to 55 min. at 160° C (325° F).
Peas <i>regular</i>	Shell.	2 minutes. <i>Keeps for 5 months frozen.</i>	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Peas <i>edible pods</i>	Pinch off tips, remove strings.	2 minutes. <i>Keeps for 5 months frozen.</i>	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Peppers <i>green or red</i>	Remove stem, seed, leave whole, cut in half or chop.	Do not blanch	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking or thaw 1 hour, stuff and bake.
Potatoes <i>mashed only</i>	Place prepared mashed potatoes in mounds on baking sheet. Freeze 1 hour then pack in containers.	None	Thaw - 30 min. Reheat - 15 to 20 min.
Pumpkin <i>mashed</i>	Prepare mashed pumpkin.	None	Reheat - 30 min.
Rutabaga, Turnip	Peel, dice and boil until tender, mash.	Diced - 2 minutes	Reheat - 30 min if mashed. Boil 6-8 minutes if diced.
Squash <i>vegetable marrow, zucchini</i>	Trim. Cut into 1 cm (½ inch) slices.	2 minutes	Thaw 5 minutes to separate. Boil - 6 to 8 min.
Squash <i>Acorn, Butternut, Hubbard</i>	Cut in half. Remove seeds and fibres. Cut into pieces. Bake until tender. Cool and remove from rind. Mash or peel and dice	Diced - 2 minutes	Diced: boil - 7 to 8 min. Or Bake - 60 to 75 min. at 160° C (325° F). Mashed: Reheat -30 min.
Squash <i>Spaghetti</i>	Cut in half, remove seeds, cook until tender, and cool. Pull a fork lengthwise through to separate it into long strands.	None. <i>Keeps for 9 months frozen</i>	Strands: Reheat - 30 min.
Tomatoes	Blanch for 30 seconds. Cool. Remove skin. Cut in half crosswise. Remove seeds. OR Cut into quarters. Add 5 ml (1 tsp) sugar and a pinch of pepper to 1 kg (2 lbs) tomatoes. Cook gently until tender, about 5 to 6 minutes.	No need to blanch again	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.



Home Freezing Guide for **Fresh Fruit**

Freezing fruits at home is a fast, convenient way to preserve produce its peak maturity and nutritional quality.

We suggest grabbing fruit when it's available and at its most affordable and freezing for later enjoyment!





Getting Started

Select high quality fresh fruits that are perfectly ripe. Unsure what indicates ripeness? Take a look at the fruits and veggies section of halfyourplate.ca for detailed information. Wash fruit under running water using a soft brush to gently scrub the skin, including melons. Drain well and blot with clean tea towel or paper towels. Remove all excess moisture to reduce formation of ice crystals on food surfaces when frozen.

1 | FRUIT FREEZING METHODS

Fruit can be frozen using any of the methods outlined below. The method chosen depends on the fruit's intended use. Dry packed fruits will be soft when thawed, so they are best for cooked uses. Sugar packed fruits are the best choice when fruit will be used for pies.

Berries, sour cherries and rhubarb are particularly good frozen. Pears and sweet cherries do not freeze well because they become too soft when thawed. Citrus fruits do not freeze well (although juice may be frozen), same goes for kiwifruit and pineapple.

1 | DRY PACK

All fruits and berries can be frozen this way.

Place prepared, whole, or cut raw fruit directly in packages, seal, label and freeze. Or alternatively, tray freeze then package, seal, label and freeze.

2 | TRAY PACK

This method is used to freeze individual pieces, maintaining their shape, or to accelerate the freezing process.

Place pieces of prepared fruit in a single layer on a cookie sheet or shallow pan, freeze uncovered for 1 to 2 hours; when frozen, package accordingly, and return to freezer.



3 | DRY SUGAR PACK

This method is good for juicy fruits, i.e. berries used for fruit pies, cooking and dessert toppings.

Coat fruit with sugar to preserve flavour. Place sugar-coated fruit directly in packages, seal, label, and then freeze. Alternatively tray-freeze sugar-coated fruit then package, seal, label and freeze.

You can also dry sugar pack with ascorbic acid, which prevents discolouration. Ascorbic acid, another name for Vitamin C, also increases the Vitamin C content of frozen fruit preparations, and it can be used on all fruits. Ascorbic acid is particularly useful for fruits such as peaches, apples, pears and apricots, which darken easily when cut and during freezing.

Ascorbic acid is available at bulk stores. Follow manufacturer's instructions for use or the following recipe:

For 1L (4 cups) prepared fruit, dissolve 1 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ tsp) powdered or crystalline ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) in 50 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) cold water; sprinkle over fruit and mix gently. Sprinkle with specified amount of sugar and mix again, then package, seal, label and freeze. Alternatively, tray-freeze fruit then package, seal, label and freeze.

2 | THAWING

Frozen fruits, are better if not thawed completely. It is also not necessary to completely thaw fruit which is to be used in pies or baked puddings; thaw only enough to separate pieces, and then proceed as with fresh fruit. To thaw 500 ml (2 cups) of fruit, allow 6 to 8 hours in the refrigerator, 3 hours at room temperature or 1 hour if container is placed under cold running water. Use thawed fruit promptly.

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FRUIT	PREPARATION BEFORE FREEZING	METHOD
Apples	Peel, core and slice.	Dry sugar pack with ascorbic acid: add 50 ml (1/4 inch) cup) sugar per 1 L (4 cups) prepared fruit.
Apricots	Wash Blanch for 30 seconds. Remove skin. Cut in half, remove pit, and slice.	Dry sugar pack with ascorbic acid: add 175 ml (3/4 inch) cup) sugar per 1 L (4 cups) prepared fruit.
Avocado	Cut in half, remove pit, peel, and mash.	Mash with 15 ml (1 Tbsp.) lemon juice to 2 prepared avocados. Dry pack.
Banana	Leave whole, in skin or peel, or peel and mash.	Package as is, or mash with 15 ml (1 Tbsp.) lemon juice to 250 ml (1 cup) prepared fruit. Dry pack.
Blueberries, Cranberries, Currants, Gooseberries, Grapes	Remove stem. Leave whole.	Dry pack. Eat grapes while semi-frozen.
Cantaloupe & Honeydew melon	Peel, cut in half, seed, and cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces.	Dry sugar pack: add 125 ml (1/2 inch) cup) sugar to 1 L (4 cups) prepared fruit.
Cherries <i>sour</i>	Remove stem and pit.	Dry sugar pack: add 250 ml (1 cup) sugar to 1 L (4 cups) prepared fruit.
Citrus juices, apple juice / cider	Freshly squeeze citrus juice or press apple juice.	Freeze immediately leaving 2.5 cm (1 inch) headspace. Will keep for 2 to 3 months.
Figs	Remove stem. Peel if desired. Leave whole or slice.	Dry pack.
Mangos	Score skin in 4 sections, peel like a banana. Cut mango from seed, and slice or puree mango slices.	Dry pack slices or pour mango purée into container or ice cube tray, freeze and dry pack.
Nectarines	Blanch for 30 seconds. Remove skin. Cut in half, remove pit, and slice.	Dry pack with lemon juice: add 20 ml (1 Tbsp.) lemon juice to 1 L (4 cups) prepared fruit. Dry pack, freeze.
Papayas	Peel. Remove stem end. Seed. Slice or puree papaya.	Dry pack slice or pour purée into container or ice cube tray, dry pack, and freeze.
Peaches	Blanch for 30 seconds. Remove skin. Cut in half, remove pit, and slice.	Dry sugar pack with ascorbic acid: add 175 ml (3/4 cup) sugar per 1 L (4 cups) prepared fruit.
Plums	Blanch for 30 seconds. Remove skin. Cut in half, remove pit, and slice.	Dry sugar pack: add 175 ml (3/4 cup) sugar per 1 L (4 cups) prepared fruit.
Raspberries, Blackberries	Leave whole.	Dry sugar pack: add 175 ml (3/4 cup) sugar per 1 L (4 cups) prepared fruit or dry pack.
Rhubarb	Cut stalks in 2.5 cm (1 inch) lengths, or make into sauce.	Dry pack or sweeten to taste. Pack cold.
Strawberries	Remove caps. Leave whole, slice or cut into quarters.	Dry pack or dry sugar pack: add 125 ml (1/2 cup) sugar per 1 L (4 cups) prepared berries