



# Preservation: Freezing

**Freezing** is a simple and quick way to preserve foods at home and allows you to enjoy garden/farm fresh produce all year round.

## 1) Selecting and Preparing Vegetables

- ❑ Use vegetables at peak flavor and texture.
- ❑ Ideally, harvest in the cool part of the morning and freeze within two hours.
- ❑ Sort and discard any produce with decay, bruises or mold.
- ❑ Wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water.

## 2) Blanching

Blanching and prompt cooling are necessary steps in preparing practically every vegetable for freezing. Blanching destroys bacteria, deactivates enzymes and helps remove any surface dirt.

- ❑ **Steam Blanch Vegetables & Fruits (recommended method):**
  - Put a minimum of 2 inches water in a large pot.
  - Heat water to boiling.
  - Place a rack or colander in pot to keep vegetables above water.
  - Place prepared vegetables directly in colander or first in a cheesecloth bag, work with small batches vegetables.
  - Cover pot and steam.
  - Half way through - check to see that all pieces are being steamed. Stir or shake if necessary.
  - Replace cover and continue heating.
  - Test vegetables. They should feel limp and heated through, but not cooked.
  - Lift out vegetables and spread on clean cloth or paper towels.
- ❑ **Water Blanching Vegetables:**
  - Fill large pot half full with water and bring to a boil.
  - Put no more than 3 qts. of vegetable pieces in cheesecloth or mesh bag.
  - Dunk this bag in boiling water, making sure water covers the vegetables. Shake bag so hot water reaches all pieces. Allow vegetables to cook for a few minutes.
  - Adjust heat, so water continues to boil.
  - Remove from boiling water and dunk directly into a cold water bath to stop the cooking.
  - Drain on paper towel or cloth.

## 3) Selecting Freezing Containers

- ❑ Packaging materials should be moisture- and vapor-proof such as glass jars and metal and rigid plastic containers.
- ❑ Most plastic bags and heavily waxed cartons, are not moisture- and vapor-proof, but are sufficient to use.
- ❑ Paper cartons are not sufficient for quality frozen foods.
- ❑ Use containers that allow the food to be removed easily.
- ❑ Square or rectangular flat-sided containers help make the most of freezer space.

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#### 4) Packing Methods

- **Dry Pack:**
  - Place prepared vegetables into meal-sized freezer bags or containers.
  - Pack tightly to cut down on the amount of air in the package.
  - Leave ½ inch at the top of rigid containers and close securely. For freezer bags, fill to within 3 inches of top.
- **Tray Pack:**
  - Place prepared vegetables in a single layer on shallow trays or pans.
  - Freeze until firm, then remove and quickly fill labeled bags or containers.
  - Close and freeze immediately.
  - By freezing separately first, each piece of tray-packed food remains loose so that the amount needed can easily be taken from the container and the package resealed.

#### 5) Labeling and Storing

- Label packages with the name of the product and the freezing date.
- Leave space between packages to freeze quickly.
- Once frozen, store packages close together.
- Most vegetables maintain high quality for 12-18 months at 0 degrees or lower.
- Longer storage may impair quality.
- It is a good idea to post a list of the frozen vegetables near the freezer and to check off packages as they are used.

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Source: Home Freezing, Mary Frances Sowers, Bulletin C-3401, Oklahoma State Univ. Extension Service, Stillwater, Okla.  
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