



## Drying Fruits<sup>1</sup>

Susan Reynolds, M.S.<sup>2</sup>

Dried fruits are unique, tasty and nutritious. It might be argued that dried fruits are even tastier than fresh fruits. They have been called nature's candy. Dried fruit tastes sweeter because the water has been removed thus concentrating the fruit's flavor. Dried fruit can be eaten as a snack or added to cereals, muffins or ice cream.

For diabetics or dieters, dried fruits satisfy that craving for sweets. However diabetics should be careful to consume only the amount equal to the fresh fruit exchange. Drying removes water, not calories.

### PREPARING THE FRUIT

See Table 1, "Fruits at a Glance," for lists of fruits that are suitable for drying. Begin by washing the fruit and coring it, if needed. For drying, fruits can be cut in half or sliced. Some can be left whole. See Table 2 on "Drying Fruits at Home" for specific directions for preparing each fruit.

Thin, uniform, peeled slices dry the fastest. The peel can be left on the fruit, but unpeeled fruit takes longer to dry. Apples can be cored and sliced in rings, wedges or chips. Bananas can be sliced in coins or sticks.

Fruits dried whole take the longest to dry. Before drying, skins need to be "checked" or cracked to speed drying. To "check" the fruit place it in boiling water and then in cold water. Because of the high humidity in the South, whole fruits need to be dried in a dehydrator instead of out-of-doors.

Because fruits contain sugar and are sticky, spray the drying trays with non-stick cooking spray before placing the fruit on the trays. After the fruit dries for 1 to 2 hours, lift each piece gently with a metal spatula and turn.

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**Table 1.** Fruits At A Glance

Fruit	Suitability For Drying	Suitability For Fruit Leather	Fruit	Suitability For Drying	Suitability For Fruit Leather
Apples	Excellent	Excellent	Guavas	Not recommended <sup>5</sup>	Only in combination
Apricots	Excellent	Excellent	Melons	Poor	Not recommended
Avocados	Not recommended <sup>1</sup>	Not recommended	Nectarines	Excellent	Excellent
Bananas	Good	Fair to good	Olives	Not recommended <sup>6</sup>	Not recommended
Berries with seeds	Not recommended <sup>2</sup>	Excellent	Papayas	Good	Better in combination
Blueberries	Fair	Poor unless in combination	Peaches	Excellent	Excellent
Cherries	Excellent	Excellent	Pears	Excellent	Excellent
Citrus fruits	Not recommended <sup>3</sup>	Only in combination	Persimmons	Fair	Not recommended
Citrus peel	Excellent	Only in combination	Pineapples	Excellent	Excellent
Coconuts	Excellent	Only in combination	Plums	Good	Good
Crabapples	Not recommended <sup>4</sup>	Only in combination	Pomegranates	Not recommended <sup>7</sup>	Not recommended
Cranberries	Poor	Only in combination	Prune plums	Excellent	Excellent
Currants	Good	Not recommended	Quince	Not recommended <sup>8</sup>	Not recommended
Dates	Excellent	Only in combination	Rhubarb	Good <sup>9</sup>	Fair
Figs	Excellent	Only in combination	Strawberries	Fair to good	Excellent
Grapes	Excellent	Fair to good			
<p>1. High fat content.</p> <p>2. High seed content and slow rate of drying.</p> <p>3. Too juicy and pulp lacks firm texture.</p> <p>4. Too small and tart; can be combined with other fruit for leather.</p> <p>5. Grainy flesh full of seeds; combine with other fruit for leather.</p> <p>6. High oil content. Bitter flavor removable only by long processing.</p> <p>7. Pulp is full of seeds.</p> <p>8. Hard flesh and strongly acidic flavor. Combine with other fruit for leather.</p> <p>9. <b>Never</b> consume leaves-they contain toxic salts of oxalic acid.</p>					

**Table 2.** Drying Fruits At Home

Fruit	Preparation	Pretreatment (Choose One)			Other	Drying Times Dehydrator (hours)*
		Sulfur (hours)	Blanch			
			Steam (minutes)	Syrup (minutes)		
Apples	Peel and core, cut into slices or rings about 1/8-inch thick.	¾	3-5 (depending on texture)	10	-ascorbic acid solution -ascorbic acid mixture -fruit juice dip -sulfite dip	6-12
Apricots	Pit and halve. May slice if desired.	2	3-4	10	-ascorbic acid solution -ascorbic acid mixture -fruit juice dip -sulfite dip	24-36**
Bananas	Use solid yellow or slightly brown-flecked bananas. Avoid bruised or overripe bananas. Peel and slice ¼-inch to 1/8-inch thick, crosswise or lengthwise.				-honey dip -ascorbic acid solution -ascorbic acid mixture -fruit juice dip -sulfite dip	8-10
Berries	Wash and drain berries.					
Firm:	With waxy coating - blueberries, cranberries, currants, gooseberries, huckleberries.				-Plunge into boiling water 15-30 seconds to "check" skins. Stop cooking action by placing fruit in ice water. Drain on paper towels.	24-36
Soft:	Boysenberries and strawberries				-No treatment necessary.	24-36
Cherries	Stem, wash, drain, and pit fully ripe cherries. Cut in half, chop or leave whole.			10 (for sour cherries)	-Whole:dip in boiling water 30 seconds or more to "check" skins. -Cut and pitted:no treatment necessary.	24-36

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Fruit	Preparation	Pretreatment (Choose One)		Other	Drying Times Dehydrator (hours)*	
		Sulfur (hours)	Blanch			
			Steam (minutes)			Syrup (minutes)
Citrus peel	Peels of citron, grapefruit, kumquat, lime, lemon, tangelo and tangerine can be dried. Thick-skinned navel orange peel dries better than thin-skinned Valencia peel. Wash thoroughly. Remove outer 1/6-to 1/8-inch of peel. Avoid white bitter pith.			-No pretreatment	8-12	
Figs	Select fully ripe fruit. Immature fruit may sour before drying. Wash or clean whole fruit with damp cloth. Leave small fruit whole, otherwise cut in half.	1 (whole)		-Whole:Dip in boiling water 30 seconds or more to "check" skins. Plunge in ice water to stop further cooking. Drain on paper towels.	6-12**	
Grapes					12-20	
Seedless:	Leave whole			-Whole:Dip in boiling water 30 seconds or more to "check" skins. Plunge in ice water to stop further cooking. Drain on paper towels.		
With Seeds:	-Cut in half and remove seeds			-Halves:No treatment necessary.		
Nectarines and Peaches	When sulfuring, pit and halve; if desired, remove skins. For steam and syrup blanching, leave whole, then pit and halve. May also be sliced or quartered.	2-3 (halves) 1 (slices)	8	10	-ascorbic acid solution -ascorbic acid mixture -fruit juice dip -sulfiting	36-48**

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Fruit	Preparation	Pretreatment (Choose One)			Other	Drying Times Dehydrator (hours)*
		Sulfur (hours)	Blanch			
			Steam (minutes)	Syrup (minutes)		
Pears	Cut in half and core. Peeling preferred. May also slice or quarter.	5 (halves) 2 (slices)	6 (halves)	10	-ascorbic acid solution -ascorbic acid mixture -fruit juice dip -sulfiting	24-36**
Persimmons	Use firm fruit of long, soft varieties or fully ripe fruit of round drier varieties. Peel and slice using stainless steel knife.				-may syrup blanch	12-15**
Pineapple	Use fully ripe, fresh pineapple. Wash, peel and remove thorny eyes. Slice lengthwise and remove core. Cut in ½-inch slices, crosswise.				-No treatment necessary	24-36
Plums (Prunes)	Leave whole or if sulfuring, halve the fruit.	1			-Sun drying:(whole) dip in boiling water 30 seconds or more to "check" skins. -Oven or dehydrator drying:rinse in hot tap water.	24-36**
<p>* Because of variations in air circulation, drying times in conventional ovens could be up to twice as long. Drying times for sun drying could range from 2 to 6 days, depending on temperature and humidity.</p> <p>** Drying times are shorter for slices and other cuts of fruit.</p>						