

COMMUNITY FOOD INITIATIVES

FREEZING & DEHYDRATING WORKSHOP

For all Food Preservation use Good quality produce! Produce will only taste as good as they did fresh so preserve it at its peak ripeness for best flavor. Remove blemishes to prevent bacteria growth.

Freezing

A freezer is a time machine back to summer all year-round!

Equipment:

-A Freezer

-A Marker: label everything with contents and date

-Containers:

-Freezer bags—cost effective and stack well. Use a straw to suck out all the air, or use a vacuum sealer

-Canning Jars -if you're trying to reduce plastics, fragile, take up a lot of space. Allow for lots of head space for liquids to expand and contract to prevent breakage

-Tupper Ware—stack well, reusable,

-Ice Cube Trays—great for herbs and sauces like pesto!

Storage: Keep in mind the fill height to allow for expansion of liquids—leave 1-2 inches of space in containers. Also, freezers need good air circulation to function well, so don't overcrowd or put hot foods in the freezer.

Process:

A. **Individually Freezing:** High acid foods (berries, tomatoes, peppers) are good candidates for direct freezing. Minimal prep work and makes for easy access to just a handful of what you need.

You can remove the skins if you want once you pull them from the freezer by running them under warm water!

1. Arrange clean, dry produce on a baking sheet making sure none are touching each other and place in the freezer until frozen. You can stack baking sheets by putting jelly jars in each corner to act as pillars.
2. Once the food is fully frozen (overnight) repackage it into airtight containers.

B. **Blanching:** For many low-acid foods, a quick blanching helps deactivate enzymes that would quicken their deterioration, even when in a freezer.

1. Wash all produce
2. Fill a large bowl with water and ice
3. Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil
4. Using a slotted spoon, place produce (up to a pound at a time) in the boiling water and set the timer for the time indicated on your recipe (usually between 30-60 seconds)
5. Remove produce from the boiling water and plunge it into the ice bath.
6. Let the food chill completely while you repeat the process with the remaining produce.
7. When produce is chilled, drain and proceed with the recipe. If freezing directly after blanching, place into airtight containers.

C. **Roasting/Charring:** This process brings out sugars in food and decreases their volume so they'll take up less space. Charring can also help remove the skins from foods such as peppers.

1. Preheat gas or charcoal grill or broiler
2. Lightly coat clean dry produce with oil (canola, grapeseed or olive oil)
3. Set the produce close to the heating element, either 3-4 inches under the broiler or above hottest part of the flame
4. Allow the produce to char, turning as necessary to char all surfaces
5. Remove produce to a heatproof bowl and cover with a lid for 5 minutes
6. Remove lid and allow produce to return to room temperature

7. Slip off skins and remove seeds and stems

8. Package in airtight containers for freezing

D. Reducing and Carmelizing: These foods are cooked way down, leaving you with concentrated flavor that takes up very little space.

1. Set a large, heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat

2. Add fat (oil, butter)

3. Add the prepared produce and sprinkle with salt, then cover to coax out the juices

4. Once produce is tender (5-7 minutes) remove the lid and reduce to low heat and stir occasionally

5. When the produce is carmelized, add a splash of liquid (according to the recipe-usually wine, veggie stock or water) to deglaze the pan. Remove from heat and allow to cool to room temperature before packaging for the freezer

Drying

Economical, low tech, easy to store, lightweight, concentrated. Drying works by removing all the moisture from foods so that bacterial growth can't happen. It also slows down decomposition.

1. **Air Drying Methods:** Good for dry climates

Equipment: needle & thread

Processes:

A. Dried Bouquets: Good for herbs. Gather stalks in one hand, bind them with twine or cord, hang them upside down in a well-ventilated area until they're brittle, then you can store as-is or crush petals or leaves into a sealed container.

B. Laundry Lines: Good method for beans (which need to be blanched first) and chilies. Space beans or chilies a bit apart so they have good air circulation all the way around.

Ensure there isn't any extra moisture by baking them on a sheet in the oven at 170 degrees for 15 minutes before storing in an airtight container.

- C. **Ristras:** Braided garlands. Good for chilies and garlic. Using a needle and thread, run it through the stem of each chili, wrap the string around stem several times and run needle through again for the first chili, then continue with the other chilies by running the needle through the bottom of each stem, stacking as you go. Hang in a well ventilated area until pods are brittle.

2. Oven-Drying Methods: You don't need a dehydrator, just an oven on a low temperature will do!

Equipment: Oven or dehydrator, racks, baking sheets, jelly roll pans or Silpat

Processes

A. Whole or Cut Produce

B. Fruit Leathers

Oven Drying Process:

1. Preheat oven to 170 degrees or dehydrator to the setting indicated in the recipe. 170 degrees is hot enough to pasteurize without compromising nutrition of the produce.
2. Arrange food on the racks and set in oven/dehydrator
3. If using oven, prop the door open a bit to allow steam to escape
4. When food has dried (check it regularly!) let it cool to room temperature
5. Pack food in airtight containers
6. Check containers in a few days and look for any condensation—if there are droplets there is too much moisture so you should dry it a bit more.
7. If container stays dry, you can safely store the food

For Fruit Leather

1. Prepare fruit puree following a recipe
2. Line a tray, baking sheet or jelly roll pan with parchment paper, plastic wrap or Silpat
3. Spread puree on the sheet, tilting to create an even layer about 1/8 inch thick
4. Dry in oven/dehydrator until it is tacky to the touch (about 2 hours at 170 degrees)
5. Cool to room temperature
6. Slide the fruit leather onto a cutting board and roll it up into a tube, then slice into segments and store in an airtight container.