

The Blanching and Freezing Process

You can blanch by boiling or by steaming. Steaming requires a longer cook time, but may preserve more nutrients. The directions below describe the traditional boiling method.

1. Prepare a boiling pot of water. Wash vegetables and trim off inedible parts.
2. Chop or sort vegetables into regular sizes to ensure even blanching.
3. Fill a wire mesh strainer or steamer with a batch of vegetables and fully submerge the vegetables into heavily boiling water.
4. Start a timer as soon as the vegetables are in the water. Remove them at once from the water as soon as the desired blanching time has been reached (see grid, inside, for blanching times).
5. Put vegetables directly into cold water bath (under a running cold water tap or in a bowl of ice water), and leave there for the same amount of time they were blanched.
6. Remove the vegetables from the water. Dry them well with a salad spinner or tea towels.
7. Portion the blanched vegetables into freezer bags and remove as much air as possible. A straw can be used to suck out unwanted air (The presence of air in the bag will cause freezer burn.)
8. Label and date the bags, and put them into the freezer. Voila!

Tips and Tricks to Keep in Mind when Freezing this Summer's Bounty

- ✓ Consider **servicing size** when choosing containers. Many frozen vegetables stick together, making it difficult to remove a “meals-worth” of some items (like kale or pesto).
- ✓ Leave **extra space** in jars & containers. Food expands when frozen!
- ✓ Choose **square containers** as much as possible, including square mason jars. Square containers are more space efficient than round ones.
- ✓ Keep **your diet** at the forefront of your mind when deciding what to freeze. Four bags of frozen swiss chard won't do you any good if you just don't know what to cook with it, or don't care to eat it!
- ✓ Freeze foods **prepared the way you like to eat them**. Tomatoes can be frozen whole, diced, stewed, sauced, or as a soup. Meal sized portion of fresh mixed vegetable soup, stew, or chilli can be frozen in glass jars.
- ✓ Attend or host a **preserved food swap** with friends. Bring a cooler with extras of food you've frozen to trade for things your friends have put by.
- ✓ As with all preserved food, rotate supplies so the oldest stock is used first.
- ✓ Keep your **freezer in good repair**. Fluctuating freezer temperature leads to freezer burn. Freezers are most efficient when full. Keep frozen jugs of water in your half-full freezer to save energy and ensure stable temperatures.
- ✓ Veggies that **do not freeze well** include: zucchini & summer squash, Lettuce, Cucumbers, Celery, Radishes and Artichoke
- ✓ Vegetables and fruit that **do not need to be frozen** (instead, they should be stored in a cool place): carrots, apples, potatoes, beets, cabbage, and onions

Sources

The National Centre for Home Food Preservation – Blanching. Available Online:
<http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/how/freeze/blanching.html>

McClure, Susan. Preserving summer's bounty: a quick and easy guide to freezing, canning, preserving, and drying what you grow. A Rodale Garden Book. Rodale Press, 1998.



Preserving the Harvest Info Series Wolfville Farmers' Market

Putting up Summer's Bounty the “easy” way in your Freezer!

Why Freeze?

Freezing fruits and vegetables preserves much of their nutritional quality, without the addition of any salt or sugar. No specialized equipment (besides the freezer itself) is needed.

Many summer vegetables and fruit freeze very well and when eaten in combination with storage veggies, meat and/or beans, and dairy products, make up a very healthy, diverse diet that could feed you through a long winter.

And remember, “frozen food” need not be tasteless and dull! Fresh-picked Annapolis Valley beans will retain excellent flavour, texture and nutrition into February, if prepared properly.

What can be Frozen?

The fruit and veggies listed in this info piece are available at markets and in Nova Scotian gardens throughout the late summer and early fall. Most vegetables can be effectively frozen.



Starting Out...

Choose fruit and vegetables at their peak ripeness – but not mushy or bruised. Prepare vegetables as you would for eating – snip the ends off beans, shell peas, cut broccoli into pieces – and start a pot of water boiling. Most veggies should be blanched (briefly boiled or steamed, and then cooled) to abruptly inactivate enzymes, which stops the ripening process.

Nova Scotia Fruits & Vegetables Commonly Preserved by Freezing

Vegetable or Fruit	Recommended Preparation Method	Blanching Time*	Recommended Container
Berries (all kinds)	Lay out on cookie trays, not touching one another. Freeze until solid. Place frozen berries into bags or containers. May put wax paper between layers of berries in containers to prevent fruit from sticking together. Loss of colour is possible, and some people choose to coat berries (raspberries, for instance) in lemon juice and sugar (or asorbic acid) to prevent this.	Blanching not required	Bags, containers Cardboard boxes work well for blueberries
Beans (Green or Yellow string, Fava, Roma)	Blanching is necessary. Trim ends off string or roma beans. Shell fava beans and remove outer skin after blanching.	2-3 min - green & yellow 1-3 min - fava & roma	Air tight freezer bags
Broccoli & Cauliflower	Blanching is necessary. Cut into evenly sized florets. Soak in salt water for 15 minutes to remove worms or other insects, if necessary.	2-3 min	Freezer bags
Brussel Sprouts	Blanching is necessary. Remove outer leaves and cut off the stem.	3 min - small heads 4 min - medium heads 5 min - large heads	Freezer bags
Corn	Blanching is necessary. Blanch corn on the cob, then cut the corn off the cob to store bagged kernels. (Tip! stick cob into nail embedded in a board then shave off kernels.) (Another tip! Corn is one of few vegetables that should be thawed <i>before</i> cooking for the best flavour)	9 min full cob, plus 4 min after corn is cut from cob	Freezer bags
Garlic Scapes	Blanching is necessary. Trim flowering end, and freeze whole or chopped.	2-3 min	Freezer bags
Greens (Kale, Swiss Chard, Spinach, Beet Greens)	Blanch whole leaves, with the middle stalks removed. Cool, then chop and place into freezer bags.	2 min	Freezer bags
Herbs: Pesto	Blend herbs (basil, traditionally) with oil, garlic, parmasean cheese and nuts in a food processor. Fill ice cube trays with small portions. Once they have frozen, put the cubes into bags. For more on techniques for freezing herbs, see "Herb Preserving" Info Sheet (Tip! Basil retains more of it's pungent flavour if it is never refrigerated.)	Blanching not required	Ice cube trays, flatted freezer bags, or small glass jars
Peaches & Plums	Can be preserved whole (if you're in a rush and need them frozen <i>now!</i>), pitted, halved, or sliced, and frozen on trays until solid then stored in plastic bags. Fruit preserved dry like this <i>can</i> change in colour, taste and texture. To prevent this, coat fruit in a simple syrup (½ sugar or honey and 2 cups water), or in concentrated fruit juice.	Blanching not required	Trays, transfered to bags
Peas	Blanching recommended. Shell peas if shell is inedible. Freeze blanched snap or shell peas whole.	1 ½ min shelled 1 ½ to 3 min in pod	Freezer bags or containers
Peppers & Eggplant	Roasting and freezing results in the most flavourful peppers & eggplants, though blanching is also an option. To Roast & Freeze Peppers: Brush whole peppers in oil and place on a cookie sheet. Cook at 300 °F for 40 min. When done, remove stem and squeeze / scrape seeds out from inside. Strain seeds out of juice, place peppers into containers, and pour juice over them. Fill containers leaving about an inch of space on top.	Blanching not required 2 min - chopped peppers 3 min - halved peppers 4 min - eggplants	Containers
Tomatoes	Blanch, stew, or freeze whole. Blanch, peel and de-seed tomatoes then freeze whole or cook into a sauce and freeze. Un-blanched tomatoes can be frozen whole or diced by freezing them in on trays until solid then stored in freezer bags. (Tip! Blanching tomatoes makes peeling them much easier.)	Blanching not required 1 min	Freezer bags or containers

*Time given is for boiling water blanching method. See **The Blanching and Freezing Process** on the back of this info piece.