



June 2009

In This Issue

- Welcome!
- Food Preservation Questions?
- Preserve Nutrients
- It's A "Berry" Good Time of the Year!
- Freezing Containers or Packaging
- Making Freezer Jam
- Washing Produce Before Preserving
- Cost of Preserving Food at Home

Upcoming Workshops:

Check the University of Minnesota Extension website for a list of [upcoming workshops](#)

For more food preservation information:

[U of MN Food Safety—Food Preservation](#)

[National Center for Home Food Preservation](#)

[Order So Easy to Preserve \(5th Edition\)](#)

HOME FOOD PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

Welcome!

The garden season has arrived. Many households are looking forward to harvesting and preserving the fruits (and vegetables) of their labor. This newsletter, developed by University of Minnesota Extension Food Science Educators, will provide home food preservers with up-to-date resources and tips for preserving foods safely.



Food Preservation Questions?

The vegetable gardens are in, the berries are ripening...let the Minnesota food preservation season begin! By canning, freezing, drying or pickling fruits and vegetables, we can enjoy them for months to come.

Whether you're making your first batch of salsa or you've been canning for years, you probably have some questions. Where to go for answers!

AnswerLine: Talk with food preservation experts by calling toll-free **1-800-854-1678**.

AnswerLine is staffed Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. After hours, check the [website](#).

AnswerLine provides research-based answers to your questions. This free service is provided by the University of Minnesota Extension and collaborating partners.



Preserve Nutrients

If you can't eat fresh produce within a couple of hours of harvesting, freezing or canning will help keep the nutrients. A recent University of California study found that 75% of

— continued on next page

vitamin C in fresh green beans and spinach was lost after being stored in the refrigerator for a week. When fresh produce is exposed to the air, nutrients such as vitamin C and folic acid are destroyed rapidly.

It's a good idea to either freeze or can your produce as soon as possible after picking or harvesting. Freezing is usually considered the best method to maintain nutrients because blanching stops the enzymatic changes that destroy vitamins.

Other tips to maximize nutrient preservation include:

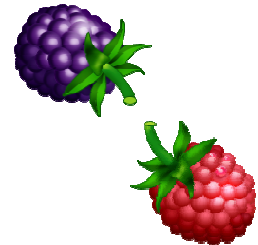
- Raw: Refrigerate and use as soon as possible; buy local to prevent nutrient loss during shipping and handling; cook vegetables in a small amount of water.
- Canned: Store in a cool, dark area.
- Frozen: Use good freezer packaging and minimize the freezer storage time.
- Dried: Store in a cool, dark area.



It's a "Berry" Good Time of the Year!

We know summer has arrived when we bite into a juicy sweet strawberry or taste a ripe raspberry.

Food Preservation season begins with preserving berries: frozen, canned, dried, or jams and jellies. The freezing of berries is a great place for a "new" food preserver to develop their skills.



Preserve fruits as soon as possible after harvest and at their peak of ripeness.

Do not soak berries in water. To clean, place the berries in a colander, dip into cool water, and gently swish, drain.

Fruit can be frozen with sugar, in a sugar water syrup, or unsweetened. Unsweetened fruits lose quality faster than those packed in sugar or sugar syrups.

A convenient way to freeze berries is to tray pack. Simply spread a single layer of berries on a shallow tray and freeze. When frozen, promptly package, label and return to the freezer. Most frozen fruits maintain high quality for 8 to 12 months when frozen in quality freezer containers. Be sure to maintain your freezer temperature at 0° F or below.

Whether you have your own strawberry patch, visit a "pick-your-own," or stop by a farmers' market, you have wonderful access to berries, and that is a "berry" good thing.

Freezing Containers or Packaging

When choosing packaging materials for freezing, look for moisture-vapor resistant; durable; leak-proof; resistant to oil, grease, water; will not crack at freezing temperatures; easy to seal; and easy to mark or label. Good freezing materials include: rigid containers made of aluminum, glass, plastic, tin or heavily waxed cardboard; bags and sheets of moisture-vapor resistant wraps; and laminated papers made specifically for freezing.

Heavy-duty aluminum foil is good but can be torn or punctured easily. As a result, overwrap it with additional layers of foil or plastic wrap.

Wax paper is not moisture-vapor resistant.

Zip-type plastic bags that are designed for freezing are good (check box label).

Cottage cheese or ice cream cartons are not sufficient moisture-vapor resistant for long-term storage but can be used for short-term freezer storage.

Glass jars specifically designed for freezing will withstand the temperature extremes in the freezer. Do not use peanut butter or mayonnaise jars because they were not made for freezing and may break when frozen. Wide mouth freezer jars are a good choice because frozen food can slip out of the jar easily. When freezing in glass jars, be sure to leave extra headspace to allow for expansion of the food during freezing. Completely thaw food before removing it.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation



Making Freezer Jam

Freezer jam is easy to make and a fun activity to get the kids involved in too! Raspberries, strawberries and blackberries produce tasty uncooked freezer jams. To the berries you will add pectin, sugar and sometimes lemon juice. Powdered pectin and liquid pectin boxes include a variety of freezer jam recipes with step-by-step directions.



Once the jam is made and placed in freezer containers, an important step is to allow the jam to stand on the counter for 24 hours, or until the jam has set and become firm. Then place the jam in the freezer to prevent spoilage by molds or yeast and to maintain color and flavor. Once you open the container, keep refrigerated and use the jam within two to three weeks.

If you wish to reduce the amount of sugar, use modified low- or no-sugar pectin that allows you to do so. Follow pectin package directions carefully.

Freezer jam is less firm than cooked jam but has more of a fresh fruit taste.

Washing Produce Before Preserving

Dirt and germs on the surface of fresh produce can be passed to the flesh when the fruit or vegetable is cut. As a result, it is important to follow good washing guidelines when preparing produce for preserving.

To avoid contaminating produce, don't forget to wash hands well!

- Work in small quantities to prevent loss of quality and nutrients.
- Wash and drain produce BEFORE removing caps, cores, pits, seeds, skins, or shells.
- Wash through several changes of clean water in a clean sink. Use water at a temperature close to the temperature of the produce.
- Produce with rinds and skins should be rubbed or washed with a produce brush under running water.
- Lift produce out of the water so the dirt is washed off and will not get back on the food.
- Do not let produce soak in water.
- Do not use soap or bleach to wash produce. These products may change the flavor and may not be safe to ingest.



Cost of Preserving Food at Home

Do we save money by preserving food at home? Some may respond that there is no way to calculate this because of the value of the homegrown produce, taste, freshness, or even the family tradition of preservation along with the hobby or enjoyment of it.

You may be thinking of canning and freezing food this summer to help beat rising food costs, but preserving food at home may or may not save you money. Costs to consider are the produce (garden produce is not free!) and added ingredients, equipment and supplies, water, fuel consumption to preserve and store the foods, appliances such as a freezer, along with personal time and energy.

If you would like to learn more about calculating the costs of preserving food for your family, view these helpful Extension publications:

[What You Should Know About Preserving Food at Home](#)

[Cost of Preserving and Storing Food](#)