

HOME FREEZING GUIDE FOR FRESH VEGETABLES

Freezing most vegetables at home is a fast, convenient way to preserve produce at their peak maturity and nutritional quality. The following links provide information on various techniques for freezing and thawing vegetables, as well as a chart outlining the preparation and freezing techniques to use for a list of fresh vegetables.

However, freezing is not recommended for artichokes, Belgian endive, eggplant, lettuce greens, potatoes (other than mashed), radishes, sprouts and sweet potatoes.

Getting Started

Select the highest quality, young, tender vegetables, at the ideal stage of maturity for freezing. Wash all vegetables thoroughly before beginning preparation and freeze as soon as possible after preparation

This section provides information on freezing and thawing vegetables, as well as a chart outlining the preparation and freezing techniques to use for a list of fresh vegetables.

Blanching

Blanching vegetables before freezing (except onions and peppers), preserves their quality, by destroying the enzymes which during storage, can alter their colour, texture and flavour.

To blanch: bring water to a rolling boil in a large covered pot. Use 4 L (16 cups) of water for every 500 g (1 lb) of vegetables; use 8 L (32 cups) of water for leafy vegetables. Place clean, trimmed vegetables in a wire basket, lower gently into boiling water or add vegetables all at once to the boiling water. Stir. Cover and immediately begin to count blanching time. Keep heat on high to quickly return water to a boil. Blanch according to recommendations for each vegetable below – do not over or under blanch.

Chilling

Once blanching is complete, remove from boiling water and immediately plunge food into ice-cold water to stop the cooking process. Drain vegetables to remove water (a salad spinner is ideal for this).

Freezing

Place chilled vegetables in freezer containers/bags, remove excess air then freeze. For best results, freeze no more than 1.5kg (3 lb) at a time. Many vegetables can be frozen as individual pieces. Spread on a shallow pan, freeze until firm (1 hour), then pack in freezer containers.

Vegetables store well frozen, for about 1 year.

Thawing

Most vegetables do not need to be thawed before cooking. However, corn-on-the-cob should be thawed slightly before cooking. If thawing is necessary, thaw vegetables in their sealed packages at room temperature. Since frozen vegetables have been blanched they require less cooking time than fresh vegetables.

Take a look at CPMA's [Freezing Vegetables Table](#) below for more detailed information about how to freeze your favourite vegetables and keep reading for useful tips to cook blanched, frozen vegetables.

Cooking Methods for Blanched Frozen Vegetables

Boiling

Use minimal amounts of water to cook frozen vegetables so as to retain best colour, flavour and nutrition. For each 500 ml (2 cups) container of vegetables, use 50 to 125 ml (1/4- 1/2 cup) water and 2 ml (1/2 tsp) salt, if desired. (Cook corn on the cob in enough boiling water to cover. Avoid salt when cooking corn as it toughens the kernels).

Bring water to the boil. Add vegetables, cover, and return to the boil. As soon as water returns to the boil, begin counting cooking time, reduce heat and simmer gently until vegetables are just tender. (See recommended times in chart below). Drain well before serving.

Reheating

- Reheat frozen vegetables in a heavy saucepan on top of a double boiler, or in the microwave.
- For leafy vegetables and those with a high water content, such as mushroom, reheat 4 to 6 minutes per 500 g (1 lb); for dense vegetables reheat 8 to 10 minutes per 500 g (1 lb).
- For more information, consult the guide.

Pan frying

Melt butter or margarine* in a frying pan over medium heat, add frozen vegetables, season, cover and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until just tender.

*Use 25 ml (1 tbsp) butter or margarine for each 250 ml (1 cup) of vegetables.

Baking

Frozen vegetables, such as carrots, parsnips, peppers and squash can be baked along with a roast or in a casserole. Alternatively, place frozen vegetables in lightly greased baking dish, season, cover and then bake at 160° C (325° F) until tender. Stir occasionally.

Take a look at CPMA's [Freezing Vegetables Table](#) below for more detailed information about how to freeze your favourite vegetables.

FREEZING VEGETABLES

Vegetable	Preparation	Blanching Time	Cooking Method and Times for Blanched, Frozen Vegetables
Asparagus*	Wash thoroughly. Remove tough ends and sandy scales. Sort into uniform sizes. Leave whole or cut into 5 cm (2 inch) lengths.	Slender stalks - 2 min Medium stalks - 3 min Large stalks - 4 min	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Beans - green or wax	Trim ends. Leave whole or cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces.	Whole - 4 minutes Cut - 3 minutes	Whole beans: Boil- 5 to 7 min. Cut beans: Boil - 4 to 6 min.
Beets	Remove tops leaving 2.5 cm (1 inch) stems. Cook until tender. Chill. Peel. Slice. Pack.	None	Thaw sliced beets for 30 min. to separate. Reheat - 9 to 10 min. or Bake - 90 min. at 160° C (325° F).
Beet Greens	Remove tough stems and imperfect leaves.	2 minutes (Keeps for 6 months, frozen)	Boil - 1 to 2 min.
Broccoli*	Remove woody stems. Cut into 3 cm (1½ inch) pieces.	Medium stalks - 3 min Large stalks - 4 min	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Brussels sprouts*	Trim stems and outer leaves.	Small - 3 minutes Medium - 4minutes Large - 5 minutes	Boil - 4 to 6 min.
Cabbage	Trim outer leaves and core. Cut into wedges or shred coarsely.	Wedges - 2 minutes Shredded - 1 minute	Wedges: thaw 20 to 30 min; boil - 9 to 10 min. Shredded: thaw 2 hours; boil - 4 to 5 min.
Carrots	Remove tops, trim and scrape or peel. Leave small carrots whole. Cut large carrots into 1 cm (½ inch) cubes, slices or strips.	Whole - 5 minutes Cubes, slices or strips - 3 minutes	Boil for 6 to 8 min. for small whole OR boil 5 to 7 min. for cut-up OR bake for 75 min. at 160° C (325° F), breaking apart after 30 min.
Cauliflower*	Cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces.	3 minutes	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Celery	Trim. Cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces.	3 minutes	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.
Corn - whole kernel	Remove husks and silk.	4 minutes- cut kernels from cob Freeze on tray before packing.	Boil - 4 to 5 min.
Corn - on cob	Remove husks and silk. Trim cobs to even lengths.	Small - 7 minutes Medium - 9 minutes Large - 11 minutes	Thaw 2 hours; boil - 3 to 5 min.
Fiddleheads	Leave whole.	2 minutes Freeze on tray before packing.	Boil - 6 min.
Garlic	Peel outer skin.	Do not blanch. Freeze on tray before packing. Keeps for 2 months.	Thaw 20 min. Chop. Add to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.

Greens - including beet greens, Swiss Chard, collards, kale, mustard greens, spinach, turnip greens	Remove tough stems and imperfect leaves. For chard, cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces or separate leafy parts from stalks and cut into 10 cm (4 inch) pieces.	Greens - 2 minutes Collards and stems - 3 minutes Keeps for 6 months.	Boil - 1 to 2 min.
Herbs	Chop or Slice.	Do not blanch. Freeze on tray before packing.	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.
Mushrooms	Slice. Sauté 500 ml (2 cups) mushrooms in 30 ml (2 tbsp) butter or margarine for 4 min.	None	Reheat - 15 min.
Onions	Remove outer skin, root and stem ends. Chop.	None Freeze on tray before packing.	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.
Parsnips	Remove stem and root ends. Peel. Cut in 2.5 cm (1 inch) fingers or 1 cm (½ inch) slices.	1 minute	Boil -7 to 8 min. OR Bake - 45 to 55 min. at 160° C (325° F).
Peas, regular	Shell.	2 minutes. Keeps for 5 months frozen.	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Peas, edible pods	Pinch off tips, remove strings.	2 minutes. Keeps for 5 months frozen.	Boil - 3 to 5 min.
Peppers, green or red	Remove stem, seed, leave whole, cut in half or chop.	None	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking. OR Thaw -1 hour, stuff and bake.
Potatoes, mashed only	Place prepared mashed potatoes in mounds on baking sheet. Freeze 1 hour then pack in containers.	None	Thaw - 30 min. Reheat - 15 to 20 min.
Pumpkin- mashed	Prepare mashed pumpkin.	None.	Reheat - 30 min.
Rutabaga, Turnip	Peel, dice and boil until tender. Mash. OR Peel and dice.	Diced - 2 minutes	Reheat - 30 min.
Squash, vegetable marrow, zucchini	Trim. Cut into 1 cm (½ inch) slices.	2 minutes	Thaw 5 minutes to separate. Boil - 6 to 8 min.
Squash, Acorn, Butternut, Hubbard	Cut in half. Remove seeds and fibres. Cut into pieces. Bake until tender. Cool and remove from rind. Mash. OR Peel and dice. OR Peel and dice. Cook and mash.	Diced - 2 minutes	Diced: boil - 7 to 8 min. OR Bake - 60 to 75 min. at 160° C (325° F). Mashed: Reheat -30 min.

Spaghetti Squash	Cut in half. Remove seeds. Cook until tender. Cool. Pull a fork lengthwise through to separate it into long strands.	None. Keeps for 9 months frozen	Strands: Reheat - 30 min.
Tomatoes	Blanch for 30 seconds. Cool. Remove skin. Cut in half crosswise. Remove seeds. OR Cut into quarters. Add 5 ml (1 tsp) sugar and a pinch of pepper to 1 kg (2 lbs) tomatoes. Cook gently until tender, about 5 to 6 minutes.	None	Add frozen to sauces, soups, casseroles, stews or to a stir-fry during cooking.

**To remove insects that may be present in broccoli, brussels sprouts or cauliflower, before blanching immerse prepared vegetables for 15 minutes in 1 L (4 cups) water containing 25 ml (1 tbsp) salt. Rinse thoroughly. Blanch as directed.*