



# Freeze Some Vegetables This Summer

Are you growing a traditional or container garden this year? Do you buy extra fresh fruits or vegetables when they are on sale? Has someone given you some vegetables or fruits from his or her garden? Do you shop at farmers markets?

If you answered “yes” to any of these, why not preserve some fruits and vegetables to enjoy next winter? Freezing is one of the easiest methods of food preservation.



## “Blanch” First

To assure good-quality frozen vegetables, most need a pretreatment called blanching.

When you blanch, you briefly heat vegetables in boiling water or steam to inactivate naturally occurring enzymes in the plant. These enzymes cause undesirable changes during frozen storage. The changes include faster nutrient loss, vegetable toughening, and flavor and color loss.

## Steps for Freezing Vegetables

1. Fill a large kettle with water and bring it to a rolling boil. You need a gallon of water for a pound of vegetables.
2. Clean and cut vegetables as needed. Place them in a wire basket or perforated blancher insert and immerse in boiling water. Keep the burner on “high.”
3. Start timing as soon as the water returns to a boil, which should be less than one minute or you are adding too much vegetables. As shown, the time required for blanching varies among vegetables. Keep the kettle covered during blanching.

Vegetable	Preparation	Blanching time
Beans (snap or wax)	Wash and remove ends. Leave whole or cut into 1- to 1½-inch lengths.	3 minutes
Corn on the cob	Husk, then rinse and sort ears according to size.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 minutes (small ears, less an 1¼ inches in diameter)</li> <li>• 9 minutes (medium; 1¼ to 1½ inches in diameter)</li> <li>• 11 minutes (large; more than 1½ inches in diameter)</li> </ul>
Peas (shelled)	Shell a batch at a time. Delay between shelling and freezing toughens skins. Blanch, cool and drain.	1½ minutes
Peppers	Wash, cut off stems, remove seeds; dice or slice.	No heat treatment needed

4. Remove the vegetables and immediately put them in ice cold water. Chill the vegetables until they are completely cold, about the same amount of time as blanching.
5. Drain well and package in labeled freezer containers or freezer bags in meal-sized amounts.

This program is funded in part by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact your county Social Services office or call 1-800-755-2716.

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## Is buying a freezer worth the money?

If you have the space and some money to invest, a stand-alone freezer can be a cost-saving appliance. You can take advantage of bargains at the grocery store when meat or frozen vegetables and fruits are on sale. Gardeners can freeze their fresh produce, and hunters can preserve their wild game to enjoy later. You can avoid wasting food by preserving it.

Watch for sales. A freezer might cost \$200 to \$400 or more, depending the size and model, plus about \$5 to \$15 per month in electricity costs. Wise shoppers could recoup the cost of the freezer within a few months of bargain shopping or preserving their own food.

However, be sure that you use frozen food within a reasonable amount of time for best quality. Most frozen vegetables retain their quality for about eight to 12 months. Ground meat retains its quality for three to four months. For more information about storing food, see the "Food Storage Guide" at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn579.pdf](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn579.pdf).

## Be Sun Savvy This Summer!

- Limit sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wear hats, shirts and other protective clothing.
- Apply sunscreen 15 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours.
- Use enough sunscreen to generously coat all skin that will not be covered by clothing. Most people only apply 25 to 50 percent of the recommended amount of sunscreen.



## FoodWi\$e Tip of the Month



Have a light snack before you go grocery shopping and stick to your grocery list to help avoid impulse buying. Be cautious about the displays of pricey foods at the end of the aisles.

Carolee Kaylor, McHenry/Pierce

## Corn and Black Bean Salsa

- 1 (16-ounce) jar salsa (mild or medium)
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1½ c. frozen corn, thawed
- 2 medium-sized tomatoes, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro or 1 tsp. dried (optional)



### Menu idea

Grilled burgers on whole-wheat buns, Corn and Black Bean Salsa with tortilla chips, watermelon slices, low-fat or fat-free milk

Combine all ingredients and chill for 30 minutes. Serve with whole-grain crackers or tortilla chips, or as a side dish with grilled food.

*Makes 12 half-cup servings.*

*Each serving has 60 calories, 0 grams (g) of fat, 3 g of protein, 13 g of carbohydrate, 3 g of fiber and 380 milligrams of sodium.*

### More Information About Freezing Vegetables and Fruits

- See the NDSU Extension Service publication "Food Freezing Guide," available at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn403.pdf](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn403.pdf).
- Ask your Extension agent about other methods of food preservation.

### ★ Just for Fun ★

What did the mayo say when the refrigerator door opened?  
"Close the door! I'm dressing!"

Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist

Contact the local office of the NDSU Extension Service for more information on food and nutrition or managing your food dollar.

