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# SAVING FRUITS and VEGETABLES

## by

# DRYING, BRINING, SULPHURING

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Since early times, drying has been a satisfactory way of keeping fruits and vegetables. The principle is to remove enough moisture to prevent spoilage. Successful drying requires circulation of air and warm temperature. Only simple equipment is needed.

### WHY DRY in 1942

For the past few years canning methods have been improved, and drying has become less used. Now jar rubbers, metal tops, tin cans and pressure cookers are scarce and sugar is rationed; therefore, it seems wise to consider drying those foods which may be successfully kept by this method.

### WHERE to DRY

1. In the sun (cover with cloth to keep out dirt and insects).
2. In a warming oven or on a rack over a slow fire.
3. In a slow oven (110-150 degrees) with the oven door ajar.
4. In a warm room with an electric fan to circulate air.

### EQUIPMENT for DRYING

The cheapest type of window screens make very satisfactory drying trays, or trays may be built to fit into simple home-made racks to dry a large quantity at once. It is important to cover the racks with screen or cloth to keep out dirt and insects, unless drying is done in the oven.

### STORAGE of DRIED FOODS

Keeping dried products successfully is a problem, especially in damp areas near the coast. Food must be completely dry and cold before storing. It must be kept in moisture-proof containers: old lard tins are excellent; or glass jars which are nicked or unfit for canning; or any jars, crocks or cans with tight fitting covers may be used. It is better to have several small containers rather than one large one, since each time the container is opened to take out food, some moisture will be absorbed by the rest. Cloth and paper bags are not moisture proof and therefore are not so good for keeping dried products as moisture proof containers.



# How To Dry Vegetables

**GENERAL DIRECTIONS**—Pick all vegetables fresh and select only those in good condition. Wash well and prepare as for canning. Blanch all vegetables in boiling, salted water for 5 min., then drain well. The blanching shrinks the product, helps preserve the natural color, destroys any insect eggs which may not have washed off, and softens the fibers, thus making the drying process quicker and more uniform. Spread vegetables on racks or screens in thin layers. **Dry until no moisture can be pressed from the vegetables.** Vegetables must be drier than fruits to keep successfully, but only greens are dried to the brittle stage.

**Corn**—1. Dry Method: For the best product, use tender corn, in the milky stage. As soon as husk and silk are removed, blanch for 5 min. in boiling, salted water. Cut from cob with a sharp knife. Spread out on trays or screens in a thin layer and dry. To use dried corn, soak it at least an hour. Cook in the soaking water to save food value.

2. Cream Method (Must dry very quickly to prevent molding. Very popular in many sections of Virginia.): Cut corn from the cob after blanching, and to each gallon of corn add  $\frac{1}{2}$  c. salt,  $\frac{1}{2}$  c. sugar and 1 c. sweet cream. Mix thoroughly and dry quickly, stirring frequently during the drying process. If not dried in one day in the sun, finish off in a slow oven (110-150 degrees).

**Green Peas**—Shell fresh, tender peas; blanch for 5 min. in boiling, salted water. Drain well and spread in thin layers on rack or screen.

**String Beans**—Should be fresh and free from specks or rust in order to produce a good dried product. Wash well. Young tender beans may be dried whole, but mature ones dry better if cut in 1" pieces. It is better to cut beans than to break them. Blanch in boiling, salted water for 5 min. Drain and spread on racks or trays. Only 2 to 3 hrs. are required if dried at 110 to 150 degrees.

**Butter, lima and other beans**—It is better to pick beans green and to dry them artificially than to leave them on the vines, because a greater yield can be harvested and a better product secured. There is less food value lost from bugs on green beans than from beans left on the vines to dry. The principle is the same as in drying hay for feed while it is green, for a higher vitamin content. Pick and shell beans, blanch 5 min. in boiling, salted water, spread on trays and dry as for peas.

**Okra**—Blanch whole, as for other vegetables, cut into rings  $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick, and dry as for string beans.

**Celery tops, Parsley, Mint, Sage, Herbs**—Dip quickly into boiling, salted water, spread on racks, and dry until brittle. These take up less space in storage if broken up.

**Greens**—If an abundance of greens are available for 12 months, it is unnecessary to dry them, but even in warm sections of the state, freezing or rainy weather prevents gathering greens for use every week in the year. Pick greens fresh, wash well

and blanch in boiling salted water 3 to 5 min. until they shrink. Drain well and spread on trays to dry until brittle. Let cool before storing and pack loosely to prevent breaking up into very small particles, which would produce a mushy product when soaked and cooked.

## How To Dry and Sulphur Fruits

Only fresh, ripe, firm fruits should be used for drying. The usual practice in Virginia is to dry fruits in the sun during the hot part of the day and complete drying in a drier or an oven.

**Apples**—Select firm, slightly acid, fall or winter apples. Wash, core and cut into rings or slices about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. Peeling may be left on or removed. Drop at once into cold, salted water to prevent discoloring (1 tsp. salt to 1 qt. water). Drain well; spread on drying trays. Dry until product is rubbery and pliable, but no moisture can be mashed out (should not be hard and brittle). Preferred temperature 110-150 degrees.

**Peaches**—Wash; cut in half; peel or not, as preferred. Place on trays cut side up and dry as for apples. Turn over once or twice during the drying process. Test as for apples. Preferred temperature 110-165 degrees.

**Pears**—Same as for apples.

**Cherries**—Wash and pit cherries. Spread on racks at once and dry (should be pliable—not hard). Let cool before storing.

**Sulphuring Apples**—Wash, pare, quarter and measure 1 peck of hard apples. Tie apples in a thin cotton bag. Have ready a flour barrel with a cover. On the bottom of the barrel, light either a sulphur candle or sprinkle 2 Tbs. of dry sulphur over a pan of hot coals or a very hot iron stove plate. Suspend the bag of apples in the top of the barrel (over a broom handle is one good way). Cover barrel to keep in sulphur fumes. After candle or sulphur has burned out, remove apples, pack in jars or crocks, and cover tightly. If sulphur flavor is too strong, soak in cold water over night before using. These apples are excellent for pies, for frying, or making sauce.

## Brining, Sauerkraut, and Vinegar Making

Many vegetables may be preserved by salting or brining. This method is especially good when a large quantity must be cared for in a short time. The chief disadvantage is that the product must be soaked in clear water before it is palatable and much of the mineral value is lost. Then, too, many people do not care for the acid flavor of vegetables preserved in this manner. There are three methods of brining used:

1. Packing vegetables with layers of dry salt — as for kraut.
2. Packing vegetables in a salt and water solution (brine).
3. Combining salt and vinegar to pour over vegetables.

In each method the acid formed through fermentation kills all bacteria and prevents further change. Too little salt or vinegar will not give proper preservation; too much will cause the vegetables to shrivel.

**String Beans**—Wash and string the beans. Leave whole and blanch in boiling water 10 min. Drain and pack into jars. Cover with a brine made from 1 c. of vinegar and  $\frac{3}{4}$  c. salt to each gallon of water (most vegetables require about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of their volume to cover).

**Beets**—Use small uniform-sized beets. Cook in boiling water until skins will slip off and pack whole in jars or crocks. Cover with solution, as for beans, and use lid to keep out air.

**Sauerkraut**—Select hard, sound heads of cabbage. Trim off outside leaves. Quarter the heads and remove the core. Shred cabbage fine and pack at once into clean water-tight container (earthenware crocks are most commonly used). Add layers of salt along with the cabbage using 2 oz. ( $\frac{1}{4}$  c.) salt to 5 lbs. cabbage or 1 lb. salt to 40 lbs. cabbage. Leave a 2" space at the top. Cover with a clean cloth and wooden cover and weigh cover down so brine will rise to the top as the salt extracts the juice. Set aside until fermentation is complete and bubbles cease to rise (about 10 days). Remove skum. Pour on melted paraffin ( $\frac{1}{8}$ " to  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) to exclude air. Store in a cool place. For a small family, several small containers will be better than one large one, so only that which is used within about 2 weeks may be opened at a time.

**Homemade Vinegar**—Cull fruits, fruit peelings and cores, as well as inferior grade honey, all make satisfactory vinegar, but most of that made in Virginia is made from cider. Crushed apples make a better product than ground ones. A bushel should make 2 to 3 gallons of juice. The cider may be placed in a crock or barrel. Some people add a yeast cake to start fermentation, but if liquid is kept at 70 to 90 degrees, this should be unnecessary. Another common practice is to add about 3 gallons of good vinegar or some "mother" to each barrel of juice. The barrel is filled only  $\frac{3}{4}$  full and is placed on its side with the bung up and uncorked and with holes bored in the ends above the level of the liquid, to expose as large a surface as possible to a circulation of air. Fine wire or cheese cloth should be tacked over the holes to keep out insects. The fermentation and seasoning takes from 3 to 6 months, depending on the temperature and the quality of fruit.