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POTATOES & SWEETPOTATOES

Potatoes do not freeze especially well. French fries are the most satisfactory frozen potato product. Boiled potatoes can be frozen but there will be a loss of quality.

Another factor to consider in deciding whether or not to freeze potatoes has to do with the cost of freezing. USDA research has disclosed that the cost of freezing a pound of food ranges from 9 to 19 cents depending on the total amount of food frozen. The lower cost is achieved when turnover is great. These cost figures include the cost of owning and operating a freezer and of packaging material, but not the food itself. The cost of freezing may exceed the value of the food.

FROZEN FRENCH FRIES

Select medium to large potatoes. Pare and cut lengthwise into uniform strips about 3/8 inch thick. Rinse quickly in cold water to remove surface starch. Dry thoroughly with towels.

Fill the fry basket one-third full of fat or oil, and heat to 375° F., keeping the fry basket in the fat.

Raise basket and add raw potato strips to cover the bottom of basket. Don't overload the frying basket. Raw potato strips are high in moisture content and when too many are put into the hot fat, the temperature drops excessively. This slows cooking and allows the strips to absorb more fat.

Lower basket gently into fat. Fry for about 4 minutes or until strips are cooked but not brown.

Remove basket from fat and drain. Turn parfries onto paper towels or other absorbent paper. Cool to room temperature. Pack cooled strips in cartons or plastic bags. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

To use, thaw and brown in hot fat or leave frozen and brown in oven or broiler.

FREEZING NEW POTATOES

Boil until barely tender. Pack in plastic bags. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

CANNING POTATOES

Wash potatoes. Peel and cut into 1/2-inch cubes. Dip cubes in brine (1 teaspoon salt to 1 quart water) to prevent darkening. Drain.

Cook potatoes for 2 minutes in boiling water. Drain.

Pack hot potatoes in jars. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt to pint jars; 1 teaspoon to quarts. Cover with boiling water, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles by running spatula or knife between jar and food. Adjust jar lids.

Process in pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure (240° F.).

Pint jars 35 minutes
Quart jars 40 minutes

STORING POTATOES

Potatoes can be stored rather satisfactorily for at least short periods of time without processing. Dig potatoes carefully and remove them from the garden to prevent sun and wind damage. Cure by holding potatoes in moist air for 1 to 2 weeks at 60° to 75° F. The curing heals skinned areas and small cracks, and thus helps to prevent decay. A storage temperature of 60° F. is ideal for keeping early potatoes 4 to 6 weeks. A lower storage temperature of 35° and 40° F. is desirable for winter storage of late potatoes.

Potatoes stored at about 35° F. for several months tend to become sweet. This can usually be corrected by holding the potatoes at about 70° F. for a week or two before use.

SWEETPOTATOES

CANNING SWEETPOTATOES

Wash sweetpotatoes. Sort for size. Boil or steam just until skins slip easily. Skin and cut in pieces.

Pack hot sweetpotatoes into jars. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt to pint jars; 1 teaspoon to quarts. Cover with boiling water or medium sirup (3 cups sugar dissolved in 4 cups water), leaving 1-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles by running spatula or knife between food and jar. Adjust jar lids.

Process in pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure (240° F.).

Pint jars 55 minutes

Quart jars 90 minutes

The small amount of salt used adds flavor but may be omitted.

FREEZING SWEETPOTATOES

Choose medium to large mature sweetpotatoes that have been cured. Sort according to size and wash.

Cook until almost tender in water, in steam, in a pressure cooker, or in the oven. Let stand at room temperature until cool. Peel sweetpotatoes; cut in halves, slice, or mash.

To prevent darkening, use an ascorbic acid mixture or orange or lemon juice.

Pack into containers, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

STORING SWEETPOTATOES

Sweetpotatoes that are well matured, carefully handled, and properly cured can be kept for several months at 55° to 60° F.

Cure freshly dug sweetpotatoes by holding them for about 10 days under moist conditions at 80° to 85° F. If you have to cure at temperatures of 65° to 75°, extend the curing period to 2 to 3 weeks.

Sweetpotatoes are subject to damage by chilling at temperatures of 50° or below.

Information adapted from USDA Home and Garden Bulletins by Jo Anne Barton, Extension Specialist, Foods and Nutrition.

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