

So You Want to Preserve

Seasons End & Apples

October 2021

End of Season Preservation

Fall is the time of year to decide what and how to keep your end of the season produce. Following best practices, your bounty can last well into the winter.

Garlic & Onions

Garlic and onions prefer well ventilated, dry, cool environments. Do not seal in plastic bags.

Root Veggies

Root cellars or cold storage can be used to store beets, carrots, turnips, parsnips, potatoes, and rutabagas. They prefer cold environments (refrigerator temperatures, $\leq 42^{\circ}\text{F}$).

Green Tomatoes

Green tomatoes will keep for one to six weeks after harvest. During that time frame be sure to try using your green tomatoes by making pickled relish, piccalilli, or a fresh relish.



Peppers

Harvest peppers that are firm and have a glossy color. Green bell peppers turn green to yellow, orange, red, or purple when they are fully ripe, usually late September. Bell peppers are often harvested before they are ripe. Keep dry and store in the fridge 1 - 2 weeks. Wash just before using. Peppers can be frozen.



Melons

Watermelon and cantaloupe should be harvested when fully ripe. They do not store well. Watermelon ripeness can be judged by thumping - a dull sound indicates ripe; a ringing sound - not ripe.

Summer Squash

Summer Squash harvest depends on the size. Smaller fruit are ideal. Keep zucchini 5 days or less, unrefrigerated or refrigerated. To freeze, grate and freeze in measured amounts according to your recipes.

Winter Squash

Harvest squash when the rind is hard and resists a fingernail scratch. Cut the stem 2 to 4 inches from the top of the squash. Pumpkins without stems don't store well. Slightly immature squash and pumpkins can be used if cured properly. The best storage temperatures are between 50° to 55°F . For longer storage, freeze winter squash.

Post Harvest Curing

Potatoes, onions, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and most winter squash benefit from post-harvest curing. All squash undergo a slow curing process during proper storage. Do not wash these produce types before storing. Leave a fine layer of soil on potatoes; leave skin on garlic and onions.



Curing is the holding of produce at a temperature favorable for healing cuts and scratches that allow a protective layer to form over injuries and cut surfaces of the stem. Cure squash and pumpkins for 10 days at 80° - 85°F and a relative humidity of 80° - 85°F .

If weather is unfavorable, a curing chamber can be created by placing a small heater in a cabinet or by partitioning off a corner of the garage with plastic. A circulating fan will help maintain uniform distribution of heat.

Apples



Each apple variety has its own unique flavor, texture, color, and cooking properties.

Choosing Apples

There are 2,500 varieties of apples grown in the U.S. There are also many ways to preserve them.

When selecting apples, their flavor is best when they are at the peak of maturity. To judge the maturity of apples, do not go by size. Choose apples that are free of defects, such as bruises, skin breaks and decayed spots. Look for firm (hard) apples since soft apples tend to have a mealy texture and overripe flavor. If making applesauce, apple butter or dried slices with your apples, use them as soon as possible after harvest.

Storage

Apples must be stored in a cool, dark place. They should not be tightly covered or wrapped up; a perforated plastic or open paper bag, basket or wooden crate are good choices. If kept in the refrigerator, apples should be placed in the produce drawer, or in a plastic bag with several holes punched in it, or in a produce bag.



Proper storage keeps them juicy and crisp. Apples should not be placed close to foods with strong odors (onions, broccoli, peppers, etc.) since the odor may be picked up by the apples. Apples that are in season later in the year last longer in storage.

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Freezing

When freezing apples, there are three methods of preparation.

- **Syrup Pack** is preferred for apples to be used for uncooked desserts or fruit cocktail.
- **Sugar or Dry Pack** methods are both good for pie making.

All three methods require treating the apple slices ahead of time to prevent browning.

When freezing apples, select full-flavored ones that are crisp and firm, not mealy in texture. Wash, peel and core. Cut apples into $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch slices. Thinly sliced apples will dry as apple chips. Uniform pieces allows for even drying across the entire piece.

Canning

Many types of apple products can be preserved at home including apple juice, apple butter, sliced apples, applesauce, and spiced apple rings. It is important to follow the latest research based recipes when preserving apples.

Dehydrating

Apples can be dehydrated in an oven or a dehydrator. They can be made into chips or slices. The length of time needed to dry apples will depend on the size of the pieces being dried, humidity and the amount of air circulation in the dehydrator or oven. Apples need to be pretreated with lemon juice, citric acid or Fruit Fresh® to prevent discoloration.

Fruit leathers are a tasty chewy, dried fruit product. Fruit leathers are made by pouring pureed fruit onto a flat surface for drying. When dried, the fruit is pulled from the surface and rolled. Mixing apples and other fruits create unique fruit leathers.

Package dried fruits and fruit leathers in tightly sealed containers and store in a cool, dry place. The advantages of making your own fruit leathers are to save money, use less sugar and to mix fruit flavors. Misshaped fruits can be used since you are pureeing them.



National Home Food Preservation
<https://nchfp.uga.edu>

N Nebraska Extension
EXTENSION www.food.unl.edu

For more information:

<http://go.unl.edu/foodpreservation>

Confused on what varieties to use?

<https://go.unl.edu/applesforpreserving>