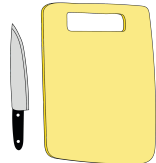


Freezing Guidelines - Preserving Seasonal Vegetables and Herbs	
<b>Overview:</b> This handout provides an overview for using freezing as a method to preserve seasonal vegetables and herbs.	
Equipment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knives and cutting boards</li> <li>Pot and tongs (if blanching)</li> <li>Cheese grater</li> <li>Freezer safe bags or containers</li> </ul>	
Blanching	
Blanching is an initial step often done when freezing foods for longer storage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a method to quickly boil vegetables for a short time, deactivating the enzymes to help preserve the food when frozen.</li> <li>Blanching has minimal impact on the nutrient content of vegetables.</li> <li>To blanch, bring a pot of water to boil, add your vegetable and cook for about 1-5 minutes depending on the type of vegetable (see <a href="#">blanching times</a>).</li> <li>Drain and quickly transfer to an ice bath (water + ice cubes) to stop the cooking process.</li> </ul>	
Packaging	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use freezer safe containers or ziploc bags. Freezer bags are a good way to save space. Place the vegetables in the bag, removing as much air as possible. Lay flat in the freezer so you can stack the bags on top of each other.</li> <li>Label bags/containers with name, date and measured amount of contents.</li> <li>Leave ½ inch of head space for expansion upon freezing.</li> </ol>	
Examples of Vegetables that Freeze Well	
<b>Pureed squash or pumpkin</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wash then cut into cooking-size sections, removing the seeds.</li> <li>Cook (steam or bake) until soft.</li> <li>Remove the flesh from the rind and mash or puree in a food processor.</li> <li>Freeze in measured amounts in a freezer safe bag or container.</li> <li>Use in baking muffins, pancakes or pies. Blend into pasta sauces like marinara or macaroni and cheese. Use in soups.</li> </ul>	

**Grated zucchini**

- Wash the zucchini and grate with a cheese grater.
- Pack in measured amounts (e.g. 1 cup) into freezer bags.
- Use in muffins, cakes, soups, and pasta sauces.

**Kale and Spinach**

- Wash thoroughly and cut off woody stems.
- Spread leaves in a layer on a cookie sheet and freeze.
- Next transfer to a freezer bag.
- Use in smoothies, muffins, soups, or lasagnas.
- Alternative: blanch for 1 minute before freezing. This results in cooked kale or spinach with a longer freezer life.

**Herbs**

- Quick Method:
  - Wash thoroughly and cut off stems.
  - Spread in a layer on a cookie sheet and freeze.
  - Next transfer to a freezer bag.
- Water Method (for longer storage):
  - For tender herbs such as parsley, mint, basil, etc., remove stems and pack herbs into ice cube trays.
  - Fill trays with water and freeze.
  - Once frozen, cubes can be transferred to freezer bags.
  - Use in soups, stews and sauces

**Tomatoes**

- Select ripe, red and juicy tomatoes.
- Quick method:
  - Wash, dry, cut out the stem.
  - Freeze in an airtight freezer bag.
  - This method is best for tomatoes that will later be pureed into soups and sauces.
- Blanch Method:
  - Score the bottom of the tomato with a small x on the skin.
  - Blanch for 60-90 seconds, followed by an ice bath.
  - Peel, core and freeze.
  - Pack in air tight containers or freezer bags.
- Frozen tomatoes are ideal for use in soups, curries, stews and sauces.

