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Handy Reference for Drying Vegetables & Herbs

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YIELD OF DRIED VEGETABLES & HERBS

The water content of vegetables varies greatly, as does the amount of waste from peels, stems, and leaves. When dried properly, 25 pounds of fresh vegetables will yield 3 to 6 pounds of dried vegetables.

PRE-TREATMENTS FOR VEGETABLES

Heat treatment of vegetables is necessary to destroy enzymes in the tissue that could cause loss of color and off-flavors during drying and storage. Heat also sets the color and relaxes the tissue walls, shortening the drying time. Water blanching results in a greater loss of water-soluble nutrients, but takes a shorter time than steam blanching.

Water Blanching – Place 1 gallon of water in a very large pot, cover, and bring to a rolling boil. Place up to 1 pound of prepared vegetables in a wire basket or colander and submerge in the water. A spaghetti pot with a fitted insert works well. Cover and when water returns to a boil, begin counting blanching time. Keep the heat high for the specified time. See chart on reverse side for blanching time for individual vegetables.

As soon as blanching time is completed, dip vegetables in cool water to stop the cooking process. They should still feel warm to the touch.

Drain by pouring directly onto drying racks held over the sink. Use paper towels to wipe excess water from food and bottom of tray. Place immediately into dehydrator or oven and begin drying process.

Steam Blanching – Use a deep pot with a close-fitting lid and a wire basket, colander, or sieve, placed so the steam will circulate freely around the vegetables. Bring water to a full rolling boil. Loosely place the vegetables in the basket in one layer or no more than 2 inches deep. Vegetables should not touch the water. Cover and start timing. See chart on reverse for blanching time for individual vegetables.

As soon as blanching time is completed, follow instructions for cooling and draining as described in water blanching section.

DRYING HERBS

The young tender leaves of herbs can be gathered any time during the growing season and used fresh. For storage, however, leaves should be harvested before the plants begin to blossom. Pick & dry in early morning. Gently wash stems and leaves in cold water. Dry on paper towels. Discard bruised or imperfect leaves. When harvesting herbs for seed, wait until the plant has blossomed and the seeds have developed.

Herbs are sufficiently dried when brittle. Air-drying, packaging soon after drying, and storing in a dark, cool, dry place, results in the best flavor and color retention.

Air Drying – Hold the cut ends of the stems together in a bundle no larger than a quarter's diameter. Suspend the herbs with the cut end up in a brown paper bag. Close the bag tightly around the stems with a rubber band or string. Cut a number of holes in the sides of the bag to allow air to pass through. Hang in a warm, dry, well-ventilated area. Check for dryness every few days. Some leaves or seeds may drop to the bottom of the bag as they dry.

Microwave Drying – Useful when drying small quantities. Place a white paper towel in oven. Evenly distribute 1 cup of washed, drained leaves on the towel and cover with another towel. Microwave (high) for 2 minutes. Check leaves for dryness and redistribute for more even drying. Continue microwaving, checking for dryness every 30 seconds. As soon as herbs are brittle, stop microwaving to prevent damage to the oven.

Conventional Oven Drying – Lay leaves on a paper towel, without allowing leaves to touch. Cover with another towel and layer of leaves, up to 5 layers,

ending with a paper towel. Dry in a very cool oven with the door propped slightly open. The oven light of an electric range or the pilot light of a gas range furnishes enough heat for overnight drying.

Dehydrator Drying – Place washed stems with leaves, or leaves only, on trays. Dry in a preheated 90 to 100°F dehydrator. Most herbs dry within 3 to 5 hours.

Vegetable Chart

Vegetable	Preparation and Pre-treatment	Dehydration Time (hours)	Test for Dryness
Beans, green or yellow	Wash thoroughly. Cut in short pieces or lengthwise. Water blanch 2 minutes or steam blanch 2 to 2-1/2 minutes.	8 to 14	Leathery or brittle
Broccoli	Trim. Cut as for serving. Wash thoroughly. Quarter stalks lengthwise. Water blanch 2 minutes or steam blanch 3 to 3-1/2 minutes.	12 to 15	Brittle
Carrots	Use only crisp, tender carrots. Wash thoroughly. Cut off roots and tops; preferably peel. Cut in slices or strips 1/8-inch thick. Water blanch 3-1/2 minutes or steam blanch to 3 to 3-1/2 minutes.	10 to 12	Brittle
Cauliflower	Wash. Cut into evenly sized flowerets. Water blanch 3 to 4 minutes or steam blanch 4 to 5 minutes.	12 to 15	Brittle
Celery	Trim stalks. Wash stalks and leaves thoroughly. Cut stalks into 1/4 to 1/2-inch pieces. Water blanch 2 minutes or steam blanch 2 minutes.	12 to 16	Very Brittle
Corn	Select tender, mature sweet corn. Husk and trim. Water blanch 1-1/2 minutes or steam blanch 2 to 2-1/2 minutes. Cut kernels from cob.	6 to 8	Brittle
Garlic	Peel and finely chop garlic bulbs. No pre-treatment needed. Odor is pungent.	6 to 8	Brittle
Herbs	Wash thoroughly. Either take the leaves off the stems or leave them on. No pre-treatment needed.	3 to 5	Brittle
Legumes	Harvest beans or peas when pods are mature and leathery – not dry. Shell and wash. Water blanch for 2 minutes or steam blanch for 3 minutes.	4 to 10	Brittle

Vegetable Chart (continued)

Mushrooms	Drying or cooking does not destroy the toxins of poisonous varieties. Wash thoroughly. Cut into evenly sized pieces. No pre-treatment needed.	8 to 10	Leathery to brittle
Onions	Remove outer "paper shells." Wash. Remove tops and root ends. Slice or chop into evenly sized pieces no more than 1/4-inch thick. No pre-treatment needed.	3 to 9	Leathery to brittle
Peas, green	Wash pods. Shell. Wash shelled peas. Water blanch 2 minutes or steam blanch 3 minutes.	8 to 10	Brittle
Peppers	Wash. Stem. Core. Remove partitions. Slice or chop into evenly sized pieces no more than 3/8-inch thick. No pre-treatment needed.	8 to 10	Leathery to brittle
Potatoes	Wash. Peel. Cut evenly into shoestring strips, slices, or cubes no more than 1/4-inch thick. Water blanch 5 to 6 minutes or steam blanch 6 to 8 minutes (or until translucent). Rinse to remove the gelled starch.	8 to 12	Brittle
Squash, zucchini & summer	Wash, trim, and cut into 1/4-inch slices. Water blanch 1-1/2 minutes or steam blanch 2-1/2 to 3 minutes (or until translucent).	10 to 12	Leathery to brittle
Tomatoes, paste or plum varieties	Dip in boiling water 30 to 60 seconds to loosen skins. Chill in cold water. Peel. Slice crosswise no more than 3/4-inch thick.	10 to 18 (slicing or salad varieties take longer)	Leathery
Tomatoes, cherry or grape	Wash. Cut in half. No pre-treatment needed. Place skin side down on dehydrator tray.	10 to 18	Leathery

Reference:

So Easy To Preserve, 4th Edition, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Georgia, 1999.

For additional information, contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension Office.

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