

Chill Out! Tips for Freezing Fresh Produce



CHILL OUT

*Tips for Freezing
Fresh Produce*

LIVE WELL UTAH

During the summer, fruits and vegetables are abundant – so don't waste the opportunity for fresh produce because you may not have time to bottle it. Chill out: Use your freezer!

Freezing is safe, fast and gives the freshest taste with the highest nutrition of any preservation method. Freezing doesn't kill bacteria—so make sure you wash and package your produce well—but it does slow or prevent bacterial growth because of the low temperatures.

A few tips:

- Freezers should be kept at 0° F
- Package in rigid, freezer-safe containers or freezer bags. Make sure to label them!
- Vegetables are best blanched and cooled before being frozen. It stops the ripening action.
 - There are a few exceptions: Sweet or hot peppers can be washed and thrown in freezer bags to be used later in salsas or ...whatever! Onions may also be frozen without blanching—but double bag them to prevent odor transfers to other foods.
- Fruits typically need no pretreatment, but for convenience sake, wash/drain, then freeze the individual pieces of fruit on a tray. Once they are frozen (about an hour), take them off the tray and put them in freezer bags. When you want to eat them, you can take out the amount you plan to use, rather than thawing the entire bag.
- For small berries, the less handling the better. Wash/drain them and put them in one layer in a freezer bag. Put the freezer bags flat on the tray in the freezer. That way they freeze as individual pieces, but you aren't repacking and breaking them in pieces.
- For best quality, do not let frozen fruit totally thaw before eating: the freezing process damages the cell

structure and they tend to be mushy. Put them out to eat when they still have ice crystals on them.

- Tomatoes can be washed and frozen to be used in salsa later with their peelings on. To peel the skins later, pour boiling water over them, and the peelings will slip off. Let the tomatoes thaw a little before trying to chop them for the salsa.
- Measure any fruit to be used in a recipe while it is still a little frozen to get a realistic picture of how much you are using. Include any liquid from the thawing in the measurement.

For more information, look in the freezing section of the National Center for Home Food Preservation website.

Chill out—and enjoy the fruits of your labors!

This article was written by Cathy Merrill, FCS Extension Assistant Professor, USU Extension, Utah County