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Dry Surplus Fruits and Vegetables

Drying is an old and satisfactory method—thoroughly tested by our grandmothers—of preserving a variety of fruits and vegetables for winter use. It saves storage space, sugar, and containers, which are especially important at this time.

Dry Surplus Fruits and Vegetables

At the present time when an increased amount of food is being raised for future use, it is important that it be preserved in the most economical way. Drying requires neither sugar, spice, nor special containers. Under the proper conditions, foods so preserved can be kept indefinitely.

If the supply of canning containers is limited, drying is a good method of saving the surplus.

METHODS OF DRYING

Preserving foods by drying may be done in four ways:

By sun drying—Spread the prepared food in wire or netting trays, cover with netting to keep the food from insects, and dry in the open air. This method is useful in dry, hot weather.

By artificial heat—in the oven or a special drying apparatus—When drying food in the oven, place it, properly prepared, on clean platters, dripping pans, or trays. Leave the oven door open during the process. Rapid ventilation is essential to success.

By an air blast created by an electric fan.

By combining any of the above methods. Many find it desirable to start the drying process in the oven and complete it in the sun.

TEN RULES FOR DRYING

1. **Use good material.** Food selected for drying should be in the same condition as that selected for immediate table use.

2. **Work rapidly.** All foods and vegetables should be dried as quickly as is consistent with good results.

3. Slice large foods to get more drying surface—Small fruits, vegetables, some berries, mature beans and peas, and small onions may be dried whole. Larger fruits and vegetables should be cut so as to expose more surface for drying. The usual way of doing this is to slice them.

4. Do not overheat—If the food is to be dried in the oven, the temperature should not be too high, otherwise the food will cook rather than dry. Use low heat throughout the entire process. At the beginning the oven should be somewhat cooler than later. The temperature should never exceed 140° F. The use of a thermometer helps to avoid overheating. A cooking thermometer may be kept in the oven while the food is drying by placing it through two corks in which holes have been punched.

5. Be sure food dries evenly—Food should be stirred frequently during the drying process. This prevents overheating and the growth of molds.

6. Keep food free from dirt and insects—Foods dried out of doors must be protected from flies and other insects. Mosquito netting or cheese cloth stretched on frames may be used. Always be careful to avoid dust.

7. Prevent dampness—Do not allow food to become damp during the drying process. It is better to bring food which is being sundried indoors at night.

8. "Conditioning"—All food should be thoroughly dried before it is stored. It is best to allow it to remain in a dry place for several days, turning it frequently in the meantime; this permits more complete and effective drying. The process is technically known as "conditioning."

9. Storing dried food—Store dry food in paper bags, boxes, tin containers, such as pails, and cracker boxes. These should be kept in a dry place free from insects.

10. Save the cooking liquid—Soak all dried food twenty-four hours before cooking. Cook in the water in which it has been soaked; allow this to evaporate to small bulk, and serve with the fruit or vegetable or use in soups or sauces.

HOW TO DRY VEGETABLES

Corn—Method 1

Immediately after picking and husking place the ears in unsalted, boiling water for five minutes to set the starch and "milk"; plunge into cold water; drain or wipe with clean towels; cut kernels from cob being careful not to cut too close to the cob. Use sharp knife. Dry by any of the suggested methods, preferably in the oven.

Corn—Method 2

Husk freshly picked corn, remove tips of kernels with sharp knife or cabbage slicer; extract pulp or "milk" by scraping with a blunt knife; mix thoroughly; partially dry by placing corn pulp in a pan over hot water until mixture thickens. Spread on clean dripping pans or platters; stir occasionally while drying. When thoroughly dry, condition and pack.

String Beans—Method 1

Directly after picking, string the beans, wash in cold water, drain on soft paper or towels; cut in one-inch pieces or slice lengthwise. Dry by artificial heat.

String Beans—Method 2

Directly after picking, string and wash beans; plunge immediately into boiling water for five minutes; then plunge into cold water; drain on soft paper or towels; cut into desired form—either one-inch pieces or thin slices cut lengthwise,—and dry by artificial heat.

If beans have become too old to use as string beans, allow them to ripen; then shell and store.

Green Peas

Shell freshly picked peas, steam ten minutes or boil five minutes in covered kettle with a small amount of water; plunge into cold water, drain, and dry by artificial heat for six or eight hours.

Greens and Herbs

Spinach, beet greens, lettuce, dandelions, and chard supply mineral material and other necessary food substances which may be lacking in the winter diet. As great a variety of these as possible should be dried.

Herbs are also valuable since they add variety to the flavor of winter foods. Celery tops, parsley, mint, sage, onion tops, pepper and cress are useful for this purpose.

All greens and herbs should be carefully picked over and washed in several waters. These may be steamed ten minutes before drying. The quicker oven method of drying makes them retain their natural color and flavor better. Only in very hot, dry weather should the sun-dry method be used. Dry thoroughly, condition and pack.

Pumpkins and Squash

Prepare by steaming, boiling, or baking; mash and spread on clean dripping pans or platters, and dry in the oven, stirring frequently. Condition and pack as indicated for corn.

Pumpkin and squash may be sliced and dried without previous cooking.

Other Vegetables

Any other vegetables, such as carrots, turnips, and potatoes may be dried. This, however, should be done only when storing facilities are poor or when the product is to be shipped a long distance. Wash, pare or scrape; cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch slices; dry and pack.

HOW TO DRY FRUITS

Small Fruits and Berries

Small berries, such as blueberries, currants, gooseberries, raspberries, and even cherries and grapes can be very successfully dried. The length of time required is from six to eight hours.

Use only sound, unbruised fruit; wash clean and drain on soft paper or clean towels. Spread on clean dripping pans or plat-

ters and dry in oven. Be careful that the oven is not too warm in the beginning. A low temperature (110° F.) at first will be about right. If this is gradually raised to 130° or 140° F., the best results will be produced.

Berries may be successfully dried in trays in open air where the weather is hot and dry.

Apples and Pears

Wash fruit, pare, core, and cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch slices. Dip immediately into a weak salt solution made of three level table-spoonfuls of salt to one gallon of water. Drain; spread on trays, dripping pans, or platters; dry until somewhat leathery. Condition and pack.

Rhubarb

Select young stems of rhubarb, wash and cut into one-half inch pieces, using a very sharp knife. If the skins are not removed, the rhubarb retains its pink color. Dry, condition and store.

