



HOME FOOD PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

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Upcoming Workshops:

Check the University of Minnesota Extension website for a list of [upcoming workshops](#)

For more food preservation information:

Answer Line:
1-800-854-1678

[U of MN Food Safety—Food Preservation](#)

[National Center for Home Food Preservation](#)

[Order So Easy to Preserve \(5th Edition\)](#)

Welcome!

The Minnesota fresh produce season is winding down and many of us hope for more time to finish up our food preservation tasks. Just because you are busy and preparing for winter does not mean you can forget about preserving your foods safely! This issue provides tips for preserving those late-harvest products.



Shelf Life of Home Preserved Foods

Storage conditions do affect the length of shelf-life of your home-canned and frozen foods. To store canned food wisely:

- Store in a cool, clean, dry place with temperatures from 60—70°F.
- Avoid storing canned foods in a warm place near a furnace, or in direct sunlight. Light can cause color changes and nutrient loss in foods canned in glass jars.
- For best quality, use within one year.

Never use foods from containers with these spoilage warning signs – loose or bulging lids on jars, leaking jar, spurting liquid, or foods with mold or an off odor.

For the best quality frozen foods use quality freezer containers, maintain freezer temperature at 0°F or lower and use within one year to 18 months.



Potatoes Can Be Frozen

Yes, potatoes can be frozen, the question is in which form: cubed, mashed, French fries or hashbrowns? Potatoes can be frozen in any of these forms, yet the quality will vary.



Hashbrowns seem to be the method that home preservers are most pleased with. Simply boil potatoes in their jackets until a fork can pierce, drain, cool, peel and shred. To freeze, spread on cookie sheet and package when frozen, or shape into patties and package. Another suggestion is to freeze shredded potatoes in an aluminum pie plate and then you'll have a round shape to fit in the frying pan.

End-of-Season Tomato Reminders

The most popular home-canned item is tomatoes. As the season winds down, keep in mind that overripe, damaged or decayed tomatoes, tomatoes exposed to frost or harvested from dead or frost-killed vines, or late-season tomatoes ripened indoors may NOT be safe for canning. Food safety experts recommend not using them for canned tomatoes or juice because they can become dramatically lower in acid than good tomatoes ripened on the vine in the garden.

Tomatoes that are not suitable for canning may be trimmed up and eaten fresh, or heated and eaten, or frozen.

When canning good-quality, ripe tomatoes, remember:

- Use up-to-date, research-tested recipes to avoid the risk of botulism poisoning from home-canned tomatoes.
- Always add acid to tomato products. Whether pressure-canning or boiling-water canning, tomatoes may not have enough acid to avoid botulism toxin from forming, so a small amount of added acid is very important.
- When adding acid, use bottled lemon juice because it has a standard level of acidity. Add 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice per quart; 1 tablespoon per pint. Citric acid is another option: add ½ teaspoon per quart or ¼ teaspoon per pint.



Freezing Tomatoes

Raw tomatoes can be frozen without blanching and can be frozen with or without their skins. The best uses for frozen tomatoes are in cooked foods because they become mushy when thawed.

The University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources provides suggestions for freezing tomatoes:

- Wash tomatoes under running water and dry with a paper towel. Cut away the stem scar and surrounding area before freezing.
- Freeze whole tomatoes with peels: place clean tomatoes on cookie sheets and freeze. After frozen, transfer them into freezer bags or containers and seal. To use frozen tomatoes, remove from container and remove skins by running frozen tomatoes under warm water — the skin should slip off easily. TIP: remove the skin because freezing causes the skin to become papery.
- Freeze peeled tomatoes: dip clean tomatoes in boiling water for about 1 minute or until skins split. Peel and freeze tomatoes whole, sliced, chopped or pureed.
- To maintain good texture and color, cook tomatoes before freezing to stop enzyme reactions.

Drying Tomatoes

Drying tomatoes at home is easy. Meaty or “plum” tomato varieties such as Roma work the best. Choose ripe, colorful tomatoes. Tomatoes can be dried with skins on or removed.

Cut tomatoes into slices ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick). Place on dehydrator trays. For seasoned dried tomatoes, sprinkle slices with herbs or garlic powder. Dry them until leathery and crisp (approximately 10–18 hours).

Heating the slices before drying will reduce problems with tomatoes darkening during the drying process.

When using dried tomatoes, soak them in hot water until softened. They make great pizza or pasta sauce and add zest to dips.



Green Tomatoes

Consider preserving green tomatoes for future use.

Freezing: If you enjoy fried green tomatoes, they can be frozen for frying. Wash and core green tomatoes and slice $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick. Pack tomato slices into a freezer container with freezer wrap between layers. Leave a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace and freeze.

Canning: The [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) has recipes for Pickled Green Tomatoes, Kosher Style Dill Green Tomatoes and Spiced Green Tomatoes. There are also a variety of relishes made from green tomatoes (e.g. Pickled Green Tomato Relish, Fall Garden Relish, and Piccalilli). The book, [So Easy to Preserve](#) (available from the National Center for Home Food Preservation), has recipes for Chow-Chow and Rummage Relish using green tomatoes.



Drying Apples

Dried apples may be peeled or unpeeled, but peeled fruit dries quicker. Dry apple slices in a dehydrator or oven (if you can set your oven at 150°F or lower). To preserve color, improve vitamin C and protect against E. coli contamination, soak freshly-cut slices for 15 minutes in a solution (2 teaspoons of ascorbic acid crystals per 2 cups of water). A solution of 1 part lemon juice to 1 part water can be substituted for the ascorbic acid solution.



Dry drained apple slices at 135–145°F for 6 to 12 hours. Apples will be leathery when dry. To test dryness, tear a cooled, dried slice apart and press between your fingers. If no beads of moisture form, the apples should be dry.

Pack cooled, dried apples slices into an air-tight glass or plastic container for several days to distribute the remaining moisture evenly. Shake the containers daily to separate the pieces and check for moisture condensation. If condensation develops, return the apples to the dehydrator for more drying.

Properly dried fruit can be safely stored at room temperature but will maintain its quality for a longer period of time if stored in the freezer.

Frequently Asked Questions

- *I forgot to remove air bubbles from the packed jar. What will happen?* Air bubbles can cause seal failure and will affect the color and storage quality of the canned food. Use a non-metallic knife, scraper or utensil to remove air bubbles. Metal tends to stress the glass jar and may cause cracks or contribute to glass-breakage.
- *Is it okay to pour cold water over the pressure canner to cool it down quickly?* NO! Wait for the pressure canner to cool naturally to 0 pounds pressure. Usually, it takes 30—60 minutes depending on the number of jars and the pounds of pressure used. Wait 2 minutes before removing the weight from the vent. Unlock and remove the lid and let the jars sit in the canner for 10 minutes to adjust to the lower temperature in the room before removing from the canner. This extra 10 minutes may also help prevent liquid loss.
- *When can I remove jars from the boiling water bath?* At the end of the processing time, turn the heat off and remove the canner lid. Let the jars cool inside the canner for 5 minutes to allow the pressure inside the jars to stabilize. This will reduce the chance of liquid loss from the jars.



Gifts from the Garden

Thinking about holiday gifts? This busy food preservation time can be a great time to think about, plan for, and set aside some jars of the jams, pickles, or peaches you've preserved to be given as holiday gifts.

Home preserved foods can be a welcome gift to many folks on your gift list. Remember how Uncle Joe liked Aunt Sally's raspberry jam? Now that he lives alone, what a memorable gift, your jam with a box of biscuits. The elderly are often difficult to buy gifts for – we say they have everything. Yet, it may have been many years since they've had chow-chow or spiced apple rings like they used to "put-up".

Jars of homemade salsa, jelly, dill pickles or dried apples packed in a basket will be a winter treat for the college student in your life.

Relishes, chutneys or herb vinegars make the perfect gift for the experimental cooks on your list.

Know a kid that loves dill pickles? It may sound like an odd gift, but if they enjoy them in moderation, why not. Jellies, jams, canned fruits, juices, pickles, salsa and dried fruits are a few gift ideas for busy families.

Whenever you give a food gift to someone – *food safety comes first*. Be sure your kitchen could pass inspection and you are following researched-based recommended procedures and recipes. Remember the elderly, children and people with a compromised immune system can be most affected by foodborne illness. Be sure to label and date all food.

Take pride in your accomplishments and take heart in the joy they will bring others.

