



Drying Vegetables¹

Susan Reynolds, M.S.²

Vegetables can be preserved by drying. For vegetables, drying time is crucial to tenderness. The longer the drying time, the less flavorful and poorer the product. Drying time can be hastened by drying small, uniformly cut pieces. Because they contain less acid than fruits, vegetables are dried until they are brittle. At this stage, only 10 percent moisture remains and no microorganisms can grow.

PREPARING VEGETABLES

See Table 1, "Vegetables at a Glance," for lists of vegetables that are suitable for drying.

Dry vegetables immediately after harvesting. To prepare them, wash in cool water to remove soil and chemical residues. Trim, peel, cut, slice or shred vegetables according to the directions for each vegetable (see Table 2 on "Drying Vegetables at Home"). Remove any fibrous or woody portions and core when necessary removing all decayed and bruised areas. Keep pieces uniform in size so they will dry at the same rate. A food slicer or food processor can be used. Prepare only as many vegetables as can be dried at one time. Holding vegetables, even in the refrigerator, after washing and preparation for drying will result in loss of quality and nutrients.

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Table 1. Vegetables At A Glance

Vegetable	Suitability For Drying	Vegetable	Suitability For Drying
Artichokes	Fair	Okra	Fair to good
Asparagus	Poor to fair	Onions	Good to excellent
Beans, green	Fair to good	Parsley	Good
Beans, lima	Fair	Parsnips	Good
Beets	Fair to good	Peas	Fair to good
Broccoli	Not recommended ¹	Peppers, green or red	Good
Brussels sprouts	Poor ²	Peppers, chili	Excellent
Cabbage	Fair	Popcorn	Good
Carrots	Good	Potatoes	Good
Cauliflower	Poor	Pumpkins	Fair to good
Celery	Poor	Radishes	Not recommended ⁵
Collard greens	Poor	Rutabagas	Fair to good
Corn, sweet	Good	Spinach	Poor
Cucumbers	Poor	Squash, summer	Poor to fair
Eggplant	Poor to fair	Squash, winter	Not recommended
Garlic	Good	Sweet potatoes	Fair
Horseradish	Good ³	Swiss chard	Poor
Kale	Poor	Tomatoes	Fair to good ⁶
Kohlrabi	Fair	Turnips	Fair to good
Lettuce	Not recommended ⁴	Turnip greens	Poor
Mushrooms	Good	Yams	Fair
Mustard greens	Poor	Zucchini	Poor to fair

1. Difficult to dry because of small size and layered leaves; strong flavor.
2. Cabbage readily absorbs moisture from the air. Keeps well only if stored at extremely cold temperature.
3. Odor extremely strong during processing; place dryer outdoors or in basement area.
4. High water content; product will be undesirable for use.
5. Product would be of low quality.
6. Dried tomatoes re-absorb moisture readily which causes undesirable color and flavor changes; and shortens shelf life. Package tightly. Black color can develop because of oxidation.

Table 2. Drying Vegetables At Home				
Vegetable	Preparation	Blanching Time		Drying Time Dehydrator (hours)
		Steam (minutes)	Water (minutes)	
Artichokes, globe	Cut hearts into 1/8-inch strips. Heat in boiling solution of ¾ cups water and 1 tablespoon lemon juice.		6-8	4-6
Asparagus	Wash thoroughly. Cut large tips in half.	4-5	3½-4½	4-6
Beans, green	Wash thoroughly. Cut in short pieces or lengthwise. (May freeze for 30 to 40 minutes after blanching for better texture.)	2-2½	2	8-14
Beets	Cook as usual. Cool; peel. Cut into shoestring strips 1/8-inch thick.	Already cooked no further blanching required.		10-12
Broccoli	Trim, cut as for serving. Wash thoroughly. Quarter stalks lengthwise.	3-3½	2	12-15
Brussels sprouts	Cut in half lengthwise through stem.	6-7	4½-5½	12-18
Cabbage	Remove outer leaves; quarter and core. Cut into strips 1/8-inch thick.	2½-3"	1½-2	10-12
Carrots	Use only crisp, tender carrots. Wash thoroughly. Cut off roots and tops; preferably peel, cut in slices or strips 1/8-inch thick.	3-3½	3½	110-12
Cauliflower	Prepare as for serving.	4-5	3-4	12-15
Celery	Trim stalks. Wash stalks and leaves thoroughly. Slice stalks.	2	2	10-16
Corn, cut	Select tender, mature sweet corn. Husk and trim. Cut the kernels from the cob after blanching.	5-6	4-5	6-10
Eggplant	Use the directions for summer squash.	3½	3	12-14
Garlic (chard, kale, turnips, spinach)	Peel and finely chop garlic bulbs. No other pretreatment is needed. Odor is pungent.	No blanching needed.		6-8

Table 2. Drying Vegetables At Home				
Vegetable	Preparation	Blanching Time		Drying Time Dehydrator (hours)
		Steam (minutes)	Water (minutes)	
Greens (chard, kale, turnips, spinach)	Use only young tender leaves. Wash and trim very thoroughly.	2-2½	1½	8-10
Horseradish	Wash; remove small rootlets and stubs. Peel or scrape roots. Grate.		None	4-10
Mushrooms (WARNING, see footnote ***)	Scrub thoroughly. Discard any tough, woody stalks. Cut tender stalks into short sections. Do not peel small mushrooms. Peel large mushrooms, slice.		None	8-10
Okra	Wash, trim, slice crosswise in 1/8 to ¼-inch disks.		None	8-10
Onions	Wash, remove outer "paper shell." Remove tops and root ends, slice 1/8-to ¼-inch thick.		None	3-9
Parsley	Wash thoroughly. Separate cluster. Discard long or tough stems.		None	1-2
Peas, green	Shell.	3	2	8-10
Peppers and Pimientos	Wash, stem, core. Remove "partitions." Cut into disks about 3/8- by 3/8-inch.		None	8-12
Potatoes	Wash, peel. Cut into shoestring strips ¼-inch thick, or cut in slices 1/8-inch thick.	6-8	5-6	8-12
Pumpkin and hubbard squash	Cut or break into pieces. Remove seeds and cavity pulp. Cut into 1-inch strips. Peel rind. Cut strips crosswise into pieces about 1/8-inch thick.	2½-3	1	10-16
Squash, summer	Wash, trim, cut into ¼-inch slices.	2½-3	1½	10-12
Tomatoes, for stewing	Steam or dip in boiling water to loosen skins. Chill in cold water. Peel. Cut into sections about ¾-inch wide, or slice. Cut small pear or plum tomatoes in half.	3	1	10-18

Table 2. Drying Vegetables At Home				
Vegetable	Preparation	Blanching Time		Drying Time Dehydrator[*](hours)
		Steam (minutes)	Water (minutes)	
[*] Drying times in a conventional oven could be up to twice as long, depending on air circulation. ^{**} Steam until wilted. ^{***} WARNING: The toxins of poisonous varieties of mushrooms are not destroyed by drying or by cooking. Only an expert can differentiate between poisonous and edible varieties.				