HARVEST: Best Harvest Techniques and Putting Away for Winter

FRESH FORK MARKET
LOCAL PROVISIONS FOR MODERN DOMESTIC LIVING

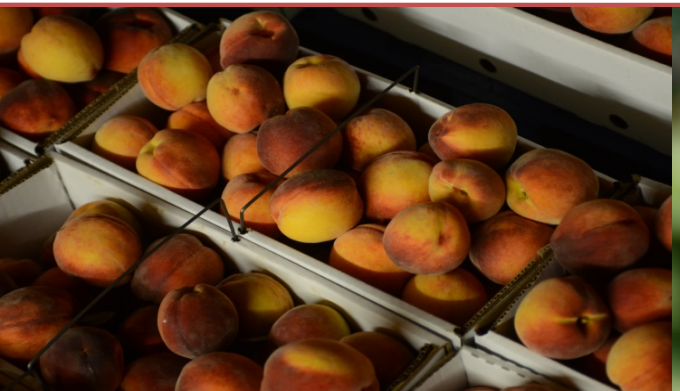
Outline: Possible Topics

When to Pick
- Time and How

Storing for Fresh Consumption
- Hydrocooling or “shocking”
- Proper humidity and storage of greens and “fruits”
- When not to refrigerate

Long Term Storage
- “Curing” potatoes and squash
- Best storage conditions
- Prevent Changes in Environment

Preservation Techniques
- Freezing
- Acidified Canning – jams, preserves, pickles
- Dehydrating
- Lacto-Fermentation



When to Harvest

Time of Day:

Vegetables are best harvested in the cool morning hours so that they stay crisp and store longer .

This is especially important for leafy greens like lettuce, chard and fresh herbs such as parsley and basil. It also applies to crisp fruiting vegetables like peas, and anything in the cabbage family like broccoli and radishes.

If a morning harvest is impossible, pick in the evening after the heat of the late afternoon sun has begun to wane.

Tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, and root vegetables are less sensitive to wilting.

When to Harvest

Tips:

Keep fruits and vegetables cool and use as soon as possible for best flavor and optimum nutrition.

Avoid damaging the plant stem and foliage when harvesting. Cut rather than tear to preserve the quality of the plant.

Harvest when the plant is dry.

When to Harvest

Ripeness:

Harvesting when the fruits and veggies are at their peak is key to the best flavors.

Consult your seed packet and other sources for best information.

Different varieties of the same vegetable will be best at different times.

For approximate dates try: http://www.pickyourown.org/OHharvestcalendar.htm

For hands on guide try: http://www.reneesgarden.com/articles/harvest.html

Storage for fresh consumption

Hydrocooling:

While a vegetable is growing in the garden, it naturally creates and holds heat. After harvest, the plant keeps creating heat, which turns its sugars into starches. Until the vegetable is cooled down, it will keep losing sugars—and its sweet taste!

Hydrocooling

-***Immerse in cold water*** immediately after harvest

-Leafy vegetables ***take only a minute or two***; bigger vegetable, like corn, can take longer

- ***Dry off excessive water***.

Store in refrigerator.

Storage for fresh consumption

High Humidity (90-100%)

leafy greens, beans, cucumber, asparagus, broccoli, celery, avocado, berries, green onions, and pears.

Medium Humidity (80-90%)

melon, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and citrus.

Low Humidity

dried garlic and onions, pumpkin, and squash.

Storage for fresh consumption

Store all fruits and veggies in a cool place. Most will last longest in a refrigerated environment:

Not refrigerated

apples (fewer than 7 days)
watermelons
basil (in water)
cucumbers
dry onions
eggplant
garlic
peppers
potatoes
pumpkins
winter squash
sweet potatoes
tomatoes

Refrigerated

apples (more than 7 days)
apricots
blackberries
blueberries
cherries
cut fruits
grapes
raspberries
strawberries
asparagus
green beans
Lima beans
beets
broccoli
Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots
cauliflower
celery
green onion
herbs (not basil)
leaf vegetables
leeks
lettuce
mushrooms
peas
radishes
spinach
sprouts
summer squash
sweet corn

Long term storage

“Curing” potatoes and squash

- Cure potatoes/squash at a temperature of 45 to 60 degrees and high humidity for two weeks.
- Remove any potatoes or squash that are soft or blemished to preserve the rest of the crop.

Best storage conditions

- Store at 40 to 45 degrees and relative humidity of 90 percent.
- Store in a dark location.
- If storage temperatures are above 45 degrees Fahrenheit, potatoes will start to sprout after two or three months.
- Do not allow to freeze.
- Changes in temperature or humidity will affect the long term storage of potatoes and squash.

Preservation Techniques

Freezing:

Most vegetables maintain high quality for 12 to 18 months at 0 degrees F.

Blanching and prompt cooling are necessary steps in preparing practically every vegetable, except herbs and green peppers, for freezing.

Blanching can be done with steam or hot water.

Dry Pack: Frozen together in a “lump.”

Tray Pack: Frozen in individual pieces and then packed together.

Preservation Techniques

Water Bath Canning:

Boiling water bath canning can be used to preserve high-acid foods such as fruits, pickles, relishes, acidified tomatoes, fruit jellies, jams, butters, marmalades, and preserves.

Uses boiling water to kill bacteria and enzymes.

Will not kill Botulism, so product must be less than 4.6ph.

Use only tempered jars with tight sealing lids.

Must be used with liquids.

Maintain proper headspace.

Always use up to date processing times.

Tomatoes: add acid to be safe (lemon juice or citric acid).

Preservation Techniques

Pressure Canning:

Low acid foods (such as vegetables) must be canned using a pressure canner to kill botulism bacteria. Use pressure canning equipment according to manufacturer's guidelines.

A water bath canner is fine for acidic fruits and vegetables, but for almost all other vegetables, like carrots, squash, green beans, etc. you'll need a pressure canner.

Always follow up to date pressure canning processing times.

Do not rush processing and follow all the guidelines to produce a truly safe product.

Preservation Techniques

Dehydrating:

Drying or dehydrating vegetables is one of the oldest known methods of food preservation. And good news, you can dehydrate vegetables at home with equipment you have on hand.

A home oven will only dry small quantities at a time — up to 6lbs

Set the oven at the lowest temperature and preheat to 140°. Drying at oven temps higher than 200°F will cook.

“Raw Dehydrating” is under 115 degrees.

Lay out your vegetables on stainless steel screen mesh or wooden frames covered in cheesecloth.

Keep oven door open a few inches so moist air can escape.

Allow drying time of between 4 & 12 hrs.

When cool, store in a moisture-proof container.

Perfect for stews, soups, and sauces.

Preservation Techniques

Lacto fermentation:

Lacto-fermented foods have been enjoyed throughout the world for many centuries.

Fermented foods contain friendly bacteria for your gut and many more nutrients than their un-fermented counterparts.

Food is preserved by use of lactic acid.

Products should be refrigerated.

Highly nutritious and filled with probiotics.

Excellent for digestion issues.

Examples include:

- “Live” Pickles
- Sauerkraut
- Kim chi
- Yogurt
- Miso

Question and Answer

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