

How to Freeze Unusual Fruits and Vegetables

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Fruits and vegetables, including many unusual produce items that were once available only "in season," are now available year-round in supermarkets. If you're lucky enough to have an excess, freezing is an excellent way to preserve fruits and vegetables for later enjoyment.

Fruits

Citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit)

Select firm, tree-ripened fruit heavy for its size and free of soft spots. Wash and peel. Divide fruit into sections, removing all membranes and seeds. Slice oranges if desired. For grapefruit with many seeds, cut fruit in half and remove seeds; cut or scoop out sections.

- **Syrup pack**

Pack fruit into containers. Cover with 40 percent syrup made with excess fruit juice or water, leave headspace, seal and freeze.

- **Juice**

Select fruit as directed for sections. Squeeze juice from fruit using a squeezer that does not press oil from rind. Sweeten with 2 tablespoons sugar for each quart of juice or pack without sugar. Pour juice into containers immediately. To avoid development of off-flavors, use glass freezer jars. Leave headspace, seal and freeze.

Coconut

Shred fresh coconut meat, or put it through a food chopper. Pack into containers and, if desired, cover with coconut milk. Leave headspace, seal and freeze.

Cranberries

Choose firm, deep red berries with glossy skins. Stem and sort. Wash and drain.

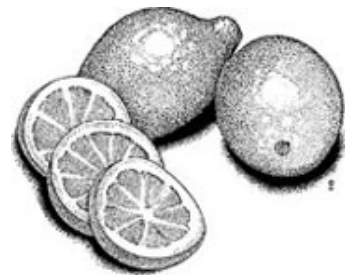
- **Unsweetened pack**

Tray freeze; then pack cranberries into containers, leave no headspace, seal and freeze. Frozen cranberries are easy to chop in a blender or food processor.

- **Syrup pack**

Pack into containers, cover with 50 percent syrup, leave headspace, seal and freeze.

Huckleberries



Select full-flavored, ripe huckleberries. Wash and drain. Discard immature or defective berries. Preheat in steam for 2 to 3 minutes to tenderize the skin and improve the flavor. Frozen huckleberries can be used like blueberries in muffins, pancakes or other recipes. If too tart, huckleberries may need to be sweetened before use in recipes.

- **Unsweetened pack**

Tray freeze; then pack into containers, leaving no headspace, seal and freeze.

Kiwi

Select plump, ripe kiwi fruit that yield to gentle pressure when squeezed. Wash, peel and slice.

- **Syrup pack**

Pack fruit into containers. Cover with 30 or 40 percent syrup, leave headspace, seal and freeze. If you plan to use frozen kiwi fruit in gelatin desserts, bring it to a boil, simmer 2 to 3 minutes, and cool before freezing. Raw kiwi fruit, either fresh or frozen, contains an enzyme that prevents a gel from forming. Heating the kiwi fruit before freezing will prevent this problem.

Rhubarb

Choose firm, tender, well-colored stalks with good flavor and few fibers. Wash, trim and cut into 1- or 2-inch pieces or in lengths to fit the package. Heat rhubarb in boiling water for 1 minute and cool promptly in cold water to help retain color and flavor. Drain.

- **Unsweetened pack**

Pack either raw or preheated rhubarb tightly in containers without sugar. Leave headspace, seal and freeze.

- **Syrup pack**

Pack either raw or preheated rhubarb tightly into containers, and cover with 40 percent syrup. Leave headspace, seal and freeze.

- **Sugar pack**

Mix either raw or preheated rhubarb with ½ cup sugar per quart of prepared fruit. Pack into containers, seal and freeze.

Vegetables

Garlic

Garlic can be root-celled for several months in cool, dry conditions. The flavor of garlic may become stronger when frozen. It also is difficult to package garlic so that other foods stored with it do not pick up its odor or flavor. Keeping these shortcomings in mind, garlic can be frozen using one of these methods. Blanching is not necessary.



- Peel garlic and grind or chop cloves. Pack into containers, seal and freeze. To use, grate or break off the amount needed.

OR

- Pack unpeeled garlic cloves into containers, seal and freeze. To use, remove cloves as needed.

OR

- Peel garlic cloves and puree them with oil in a blender or food processor, using two parts vegetable oil to one part garlic. Pack into containers, seal and freeze. The puree will stay soft enough in the freezer to scrape off amounts as needed to use in sautéing.

Jerusalem artichokes (sunchokes)

Select young, medium-size sunchokes. Peel or scrape; wash.

Water blanch 3 to 5 minutes, depending on size. Cool, drain, pack into containers, seal and freeze.

Mushrooms

Select medium and small mushrooms with white, tight caps; prepare and freeze the same day as picked or purchased. Handle carefully to prevent bruising. Wash well in cold water, and drain thoroughly. Do not soak. Cut off the base of the stems and sort for size. Leave whole, slice or quarter. Mushrooms should be blanched or steamed before freezing. An alternate method is to sauté mushrooms in butter or margarine before freezing.



Caution

Only an expert should attempt to identify and harvest wild mushrooms. Although many wild mushrooms are edible, others are poisonous. For help in identifying wild mushrooms, check with the Missouri Conservation Commission.

• **To blanch**

Blanch whole mushrooms for 5 minutes, buttons or quarters for 3½ minutes and slices for 3 minutes. Add 1 teaspoon of lemon juice or 1½ teaspoons citric acid to each pint of blanching water. Cool promptly, drain, pack into containers, seal and freeze.

• **To steam**

Mushrooms to be steamed have better color if given an anti-darkening treatment first. Dip for 5 minutes in a solution containing 1 teaspoon lemon juice or 1½ teaspoons citric acid to a pint of water. Then steam whole mushrooms for 5 minutes, buttons or quarters for 3½ minutes, and slices for 3 minutes. Cool promptly, drain, pack into containers, seal and freeze.

• **To sauté**

Heat small quantities of mushrooms in butter or margarine in an open fry pan until almost done. Set pan of mushrooms in cold water to cool promptly. Pack into containers, seal and freeze.

Pimentos

Select firm, crisp pimentos of deep red color. Peel by roasting in an oven at 400 to 450 degrees F for 3 to 4 minutes, or until skins can be rubbed off. Wash off charred skins, cut out stems, and remove seeds. Pack into containers, seal and freeze.

Rutabagas

Select young, medium-sized rutabagas. Cut off tops. Wash and peel.

• **Cubed**

Cut into ½-inch cubes and water blanch 2 minutes. Cool, drain, pack into containers, seal and freeze.

• **Mashed**

Cut into chunks, and cook in boiling water until tender. Drain, mash, cool and pack into containers. Seal and freeze.

Spaghetti squash

Leave squash whole and pierce so steam can escape, or halve and remove seeds. Bake in an oven or microwave oven, or steam on top of a range until tender. Cool quickly by placing the pan in cold water. Cut in half and remove seeds if necessary. Rake through pulp lengthwise with a fork to separate strands. Pack into containers, seal and

freeze.

Sprouts (alfalfa, mung, chickpea, soybean)

Choose crisp, young sprouts. Wash and remove seed coats.

Heat one layer at a time in steam for 3 minutes. Cool, drain, pack into containers, seal and freeze.