



How to Dry Fruits and Vegetables

Food Dehydration is the oldest form of food preservation. In the beginning, people used a lot of salt to preserve foods, and they dried their food in the sun or stove tops. Today we have the food dehydrator to help in the process of drying.

Food dehydration is safe because water is removed from the food. Because water is removed from the food, mold and bacteria cannot grow on it; thus it will not spoil. There is, however, a loss of vitamin A and C in dried foods due to heat and air. It usually takes vegetables 6-16 hours to dry, and fruit 12-48 hours. One can dry fruit and vegetables, and make jerky and fruit leather.

Choose Which Drying Method is Right For You

- **Sun Drying** This is rather difficult because you need three to four sunny days of at least 100 degrees in a row.
- **Oven Drying** Oven drying is an acceptable method of drying food, but it isn't very energy efficient, and foods aren't very flavorful in the end. If your oven cannot obtain temperatures below 200 degrees Fahrenheit, use another method for food dehydration. You will need to prop open the oven door to maintain air circulation during the drying process.
- **Electric Dehydrating** This is the best method of dehydrating food. An electric dehydrator is energy efficient and can be operated at low temperatures needed to maintain nutritive values in the food. Your electric food dehydrator should have some sort of heat control and a fan to maintain air circulation during the drying process.

The Drying Process

When drying food, don't keep temperatures too low or too high. Temperatures too low may result in the growth of bacteria on the food. Temperatures too high will result in the food being cooked instead of dried. Food that is under dried will spoil, and food that is over dried will lose its flavor and nutritive value.

Food should be dehydrated between 120 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit. You can begin drying your food at higher temperatures, but turn the temperature down after the first hour or so. The last hour or so of drying time should be turned down on a lower setting. You must turn the food and rotate the trays while the food is drying.

You will know your food is dried when you touch it, and it is leathery with no pockets of moisture. If you are testing fruit, you can tear a piece in half. If you see moisture beads along the tear, it is not dry enough. Meat should be tough, but shouldn't snap apart. Vegetables should also be tough but can also be crisp.

When storing your dried product, keep in mind that no moisture should be allowed to enter the container...ever. Dried food absorbs moisture from the air, so the storage container must be airtight. Some acceptable storage containers are jars and plastic freezer bags. If storing fruit leather, wrap in plastic wrap and store in another airtight container. Store your containers of dried food in a cool, dark, dry place. 60 degrees Fahrenheit or below is best.



Vegetable Drying Guide

All vegetables except onions and peppers and mushrooms should be washed, sliced, and blanched. Dry vegetables in single layers on trays. Depending of drying conditions, drying times make take longer. Dry vegetables at 130-degrees Fahrenheit.

- **Beans, green:** Stem and break beans into 1-inch pieces. Blanch. Dry 6-12 hours until brittle.
- **Beets:** Cook and peel beets. Cut into 1/4-inch pieces. Dry 3-10 hours until leathery.
- **Broccoli:** Cut and dry 4-10 hours.
- **Carrots:** Peel, slice or shred. Dry 6-12 hours until almost brittle.
- **Cauliflower:** Cut and dry 6-14 hours.
- **Corn:** Cut corn off cob after blanching and dry 6-12 hours until brittle.
- **Mushrooms:** Brush off, don't wash. Dry at 90 degrees for 3 hours, and then 125 degrees for the remaining drying time. Dry 4-10 hours until brittle.
- **Onions:** Slice 1/4-inch thick. Dry 6-12 hours until crisp.
- **Peas:** Dry 5-14 hours until brittle.
- **Peppers, sweet:** Remove seeds and chop. Dry 5-12 hours until leathery.
- **Potatoes:** Slice 1/8-inch thick. Dry 6-12 hours until crisp.
- **Tomatoes:** Dip in boiling water to loosen skins, peel, slice or quarter. Dry 6-12 hours until crisp.
- **Zucchini:** Slice 1/8-inch thick and dry 5-10 hours until brittle.



Fruit Drying Guide

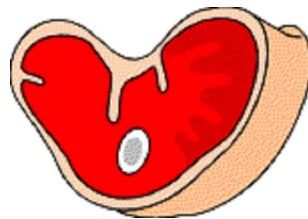
All fruit should be washed, pitted and sliced. Arrange in single layers on trays. Dry fruit at 135 degrees Fahrenheit. You may wish to pretreat your fruit with lemon juice or ascorbic acid or it won't darken while you are preparing it for drying. Just slice the fruit into the solution and soak for 5 minutes.

- **Apples:** Peel, core and slice into 3/8-inch rings, or cut into 1/4-inch slices. Pretreat and dry 6-12 hours until pliable.
- **Apricots:** Cut in half and turn inside out to dry. Pretreat and dry 8-20 hours until pliable.
- **Bananas:** Peel, cut into 1/4-inch slices and pretreat. Dry 8-16 hours until pliable or almost crisp.
- **Blueberries:** Dry 10-20 hours until leathery.
- **Cherries:** Cut in half and dry 18-26 hours until leathery and slightly sticky.
- **Peaches:** Peel, halve or quarter. Pretreat and dry 6-20 hours until pliable.
- **Pears:** Peel, cut into 1/4-inch slices, and pretreat. Dry 6-20 hours until leathery.
- **Pineapple:** Core and slice 1/4-inch thick. Dry 6-16 hours until leathery and not sticky.
- **Strawberries:** Halve or cut into 1/4-inch thick slices. Dry 6-16 hours until pliable and almost crisp.

Fruit Leathers

Fruit leather is easy to make if you have a blender or food processor. The fruit leather is like a "fruit roll-up" and is made out of pureed fruit. Applesauce works great for fruit leather since it is already in puree form.

Overripe fruits can also be used since these are easily pureed. For an added flare, you can add coconut, raisins, poppy seeds, sesame seeds, or sunflower seeds to the fruit leather. If you add any type of garnish to your fruit leather however, you will have to store them in the freezer or refrigerator. Otherwise, you can store fruit leather in an airtight container. Just roll up the fruit leather into a roll after it has dried, wrap in plastic, and store them altogether in an appropriate container. To make fruit leather, puree your fruit. Apples, pears, peaches, and nectarines should be cooked before pureeing. Pour the fruit puree about 1/4-inch deep on special fruit leather drying sheets, or drying trays that have been lined with plastic wrap. Since the center does not dry as quickly as the edges, Only pour the puree 1/8-inch deep towards the center. Dry at 135 degrees Fahrenheit until pliable and leathery. The center should also be dry and have no wet or sticky spots.



Making Jerky

Meats should be dried at 145-150 degrees Fahrenheit. Jerky should dry between 6-20 hours until pliable. It should not be brittle. Wipe fat off of the jerky while it is drying. Jerky does not store as long as fruits and vegetables. For storage longer than a month, store in the freezer or refrigerator. To aid in the curing of jerky, meat must be marinated in salt and spices. The pioneers used 1 1/2 cups pickling salt to 1 gallon of water and soaked the meat strips in this for a couple of days. As an alternative to soaking, they also rubbed the meat with salt and spices (like garlic and pepper) before drying. You may want to use one of the following marinade recipes instead. Marinade the meat strips overnight.

Jerky Marinade No.1

- 1/4 C. Soy sauce
 - 2 T. Worcestershire sauce
 - 1/2 t. pepper
 - 1/2 t. garlic powder
 - 1 t. liquid smoke
 - 1 t. salt
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Jerky Marinade No.2

- 4 t. salt
 - 1 t. pepper
 - 1 t. chili powder
 - 1 t. garlic powder
 - 1 t. liquid smoke
 - 1/2 C. water
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Jerky Marinade No.3

- 1 C. ketchup
- 1/2 C. vinegar
- 1/4 C. brown sugar
- 3 T. Worcestershire Sauce
- 2 t. dry mustard
- 1 t. salt
- 1/2 t. pepper

