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Storage Tips

Freeze Instructions: When freezing unless otherwise specified wash & cut before blanching. Blanch by placing item in boiling water for specified times. Fruits and vegetables contain enzymes and bacteria that, over time, break down and destroy nutrients and change the colour, flavour, and texture of food during frozen storage. They require a brief heat treatment, called blanching, in boiling water or steam, to destroy the enzymes before freezing. Locate blanching time by the items. After blanching plunge the item into ice water to stop it from cooking. Pat dry and place in airtight bags in the freezer. Be sure to remove as much air as possible from the bag. A vacuum sealer is the best option. Locate storage length by item, first number is a fridge freezer, second number is a deep freezer. Items without freezing instructions are not highly recommended for freezing.

Asparagus: do not wash asparagus before storing and never soak it. Trim the ends of fresh asparagus and stand them upright in a jar with about an inch of water in the bottom. Cover with a plastic bag and store spears in the refrigerator for 3-5 days. *Freeze: blanch 2 minutes. Freeze immediately (best in a deep freezer) 8-10 months.*

Apples: should be kept in a cool, dark spot. Apples and potatoes should never be stored next to each other. *Freeze Wash, freeze whole or unpeeled on a tray. Transfer to freezer bags once frozen.*

Basil: leaves should be layered in damp paper towels inside a plastic bag and refrigerated up to 4 days. Drying - gently wash the leaves, blot with paper towels, and let them dry completely. In an airtight container layer coarse salt and basil leaves, ending with a layer of salt. Store in a cool, dark place up to 6 months. *Freeze: blanch whole leaves for two seconds, The flavour will be stronger if you do not thaw before using. 4 months.*

Beans: refrigerate in a plastic bag, use within one week. *Freeze: blanch 3 min. 9-12 months.*

Beets: trim the leaves 2 inches from the root. Do not trim the tail. Store the leaves in a separate plastic bag and use within 2 days. The root bulbs should also be bagged and can be stored in the refrigerator crisper drawer 7 to 10 days. *Freeze: Cook 20 min (small) to 45 min (large). Use vegetable peeler to remove skin. 10-12 months*

Blueberries: refrigerated, unwashed, up to 2 weeks. *Freeze: do not wash before freezing. Rinse after thawing and before eating. No blanching required.*

Broccoli: mist the heads, wrap loosely in damp paper towels, and refrigerate. Use within 2 to 3 days. Do not store broccoli in a sealed plastic bag. *Freeze: blanch 5 min. 10-12 months*

Cabbage: store the whole head of cabbage in a plastic bag in the refrigerator 2-3 weeks. Cabbage will lose freshness rapidly once chopped, so plan on using it within a day of chopping. If you only need half a head, place the remaining half in a plastic bag and shake a few drops of water onto the cut side. Close the bag and refrigerate. *Freeze: blanch 2 minutes. 12 months.*

Cantaloupe: store uncut at room temperature for 1-2 weeks. Refrigerate cut melon in airtight container up to 5 days. How to tell if it is ripe: take a nice, deep smell of the stem end. If the melon smells so good that you want to cut it open, it is ready. If melon has no fragrance and is still quite firm, leave on the kitchen counter for up to 4 days to ripen, check it daily. *Freeze: in single layers. Transfer to storage bags. Best if served slightly frozen. 1 month.*

Carrots: remove carrot tops (if they are still attached) to reduce water loss in storage. Refrigerate in a plastic bag and use within 1-2 weeks. *Freeze: blanch 2-5 min depending on size. 9-14 months.*

Cauliflower: store in an open or perforated plastic bag. Keep stem-side up to prevent moisture from collecting on it. Will keep for up to 5 days if stored in the crisper section of the refrigerator. *Freeze: blanch 3 min with 2 tsp salt or vinegar. 10-12 months.*

Celery: refrigerate in a plastic bag for 1-2 weeks. *Freeze: Blanch 3 min. Can be frozen without blanching. 10-12 months.*

Chard (Swiss/Rainbow): store dry unwashed chard in a sealed plastic bag in the fridge. *Freeze: no steams. Blanch 2 min. 9-12 months.*

Cilantro: place stem in a glass of water and cover the top loosely with a plastic bag. Refrigerate. *Freeze: place a small amount dry cilantro leaves in a single layer on a cookie sheet. When frozen, gather into a zip-top bag, returning to the freezer immediately. Use within 6 months. Do not thaw before using. No Blanching required.*

Corn: eat fresh, avoid storing. If storing leave husks on and store uncovered in fridge. *Freezing: do nothing, throw it in the freezer with the husks still on. Ready to eat frozen: blanch 4-6 min. 8-12 months.*

Cucumber: refrigerate in a plastic bag, use within one week.

Dill: spritz whole stems lightly with a fine spray of water, wrap loosely in paper towels, and place in a plastic bag store in crisper. Will last 5-7 days fresh. *Freeze: Rinse and pat dry, trim leaving only feathery foliage. Place in freezer bag and press out access air, store 2-3 months.*

Eggplants: refrigerate, do not cover, store in plastic bag or let them touch any other vegetable. Eggplants release ethylene gas, which can spoil vegetables. Refrigerated for up to 6 days. However, it is best to use them as soon as possible. *Freeze: blanch 4 minutes. 9-14 months.*

Garlic: store unpeeled Ontario garlic in an open container in a cool, dry place away from other foods. Do not refrigerate or freeze unpeeled garlic. Peeled garlic cloves may be stored in a sealed container in the refrigerator. *Freeze in oil: place peeled garlic in blender or food processor 1 part oil to 2 part garlic. Freeze in ice cube trays. 6 months.*

Garlic Scapes: refrigerator for approximately 1 month, though fresh-cut is always the best. *Freezing: I recommend you make them into a pesto and freezing the pesto.*

Green Garlic: refrigerate in a plastic bag, or stand upright in water with a plastic bag around it.

Green Shallots: Wrap in paper towel and store in the crisper for up to 1 week.

Kale: Store dry unwashed kale in a sealed plastic bag in the fridge up to 5 days. *Freeze: remove stems, blanch 3 min. 9 months.*

Kohlrabi: refrigerate globes for up to 10 days. *Freeze: whole 3 min, cubed 1 min. 8-12 months.*

Lettuce/Salad Greens: wash and dry them in a salad spinner, then roll them in a paper or kitchen towel and refrigerate in a plastic bag. Alternately you can store in a plastic bag and wash just prior to eating. I have found Tupperware's Fridge Smart containers help to extend greens life significantly.

Mushrooms: refrigerate in a paper bag for up to 5 days. Wash well before use. *Freeze: stir-fry using 1 tbsp oil per 8 ounces mushrooms. Saute 4 minutes or until light brown and tender. Optional add seasonings. Cool. Transfer to a freezer container. 8-12 months.*

Onions: store in a cool, dry place with good air circulation and away from bright light and out of any direct sunlight. Place onions at least one foot away from walls to provide air movement. DO NOT store whole onions in plastic bags or near potatoes. Longer life storage idea: Place one onion in the pantyhose leg, tie a knot, then place another onion in the leg; repeat and hang the onions up in a cool, dark place. *Freeze: no blanching required. Chop & freeze. 12 months.*

Oregano: Store fresh oregano in plastic bags in the refrigerator. Drying: hang in a warm, dry, well-ventilated spot. Store dried oregano leaves in an airtight jar. *Freeze: entire branches on cookie sheets, strip the leaves from the stems and put them back into the freezer in plastic containers. Or mix finely chopped oregano leaves with just enough olive oil or butter to bind them together, and freeze the mixture in ice cube trays. No blanching required.*

Parsley: place the stems in a glass of water and leave on the counter; fresh for 5-6 days. Change the water daily. Or wash thoroughly remove excess water with a towel. Wrap in paper towel and place in a plastic bag and refrigerate. *Freeze: Clean, dry thoroughly. Chop into small pieces, place 1-2 teaspoons in small plastic bags, freeze, best to use the refrigerator's freezer. No blanching required.*

Parsnips: do not wash. Store in a plastic bag in the fridge. *Freeze: blanch 2 min. 9-14 months.*

Peas: Do not wash. Store in a perforated plastic bag in the fridge up to 5 days. *Freeze: blanch 90 seconds. 9-14 months.*

Peppers: store in a cool dark place or in the refrigerator crisper where they will keep for a week or so. Do not store in plastic bags. Storage time can be increased for hot peppers by placing them in oil: Slice each pepper in half. Carve out the white tissue that holds the seeds. Discard the seeds, stems and the white tissue from inside the peppers. Heat 2 tbsp. of extra virgin olive oil in a frying pan. Pan fry the prepared hot peppers until they get limp and cooked through. Do not allow them to brown or burn. Densely pack the hot peppers into the sterilized jars. Heat 1 cup of extra virgin olive oil for each jar that you have filled with peppers. Use a candy thermometer to determine when the oil reaches 300 degrees F. Pierce through the middle of the peppers in each jar with a sharp knife. Pour the oil into this hole. Fill the jar within 1/4-inch of the top with oil. *Freeze: pieces of sweet pepper freeze well without blanching. 6-8 months.*

Potatoes: avoid rinsing potatoes before storing, place in a brown paper or plastic bag with holes in it. Store in a cool, dark, dry place. A root cellar, if you have one. Don't store potatoes in the refrigerator. Avoid storing potatoes with onions because, when close together, they produce gases that spoil both. Store potatoes no longer than two months if mature. If they are new, store one week. *Freeze: blanch 3-5 min. 8-12 months.*

Radishes: store in the fridge in a plastic bag. Do not wash until ready to eat. Store up to 2 weeks. *Freeze: blanch 2-3 min. 8-12 months.*

Rhubarb: is quite perishable, place the stalks in a plastic bag to retain moisture and store for 3 to 5 days in the refrigerator crisper drawer. *Freeze, cut the rhubarb stalks into 1-inch chunks and seal in an airtight bag. 12 months.*

Rosemary: store in a plastic bag or in a glass of water in the refrigerator. Drying: hang fresh sprigs in a warm, dry place. Strip off leaves and store in a jar or plastic bag. *Freeze: entire branches on cookie sheets, strip the leaves from stems transfer into the freezer in plastic containers; or mix finely chopped rosemary leaves with just enough olive oil or butter to bind them together, and freeze the mixture in ice cube trays.*

Rutabaga: refrigerated for up to 2 weeks *Freeze: blanch 2 min. 10-12 months.*

Saskatoon Berries: refrigerated, unwashed, up to 2 weeks. *Freeze: do not wash before freezing. Rinse after thawing and before eating. No blanching required.*

Shallots: store them as you would any allium in a cool, dry, dark place with plenty of air circulation. If they sprout, you can still use them. Remove the bitter green sprouts if you don't want a strong onion flavour. Many cooks choose to include the sprouts and use them much like chives. *Freeze: no blanching required. Chop & freeze. 12 months.*

Spinach: Wash, spin away excess water, place layers of damp (not wet!) leaves in between layers of paper towels, roll up jelly-roll style, store in a plastic bag, squeeze or suck out excess air and tie closed. *Freezing: remove stems. Blanch 2 min. 10-12 months.*

Squash (summer) keep in a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator for 1-2 weeks. *Freeze: blanch 3 min. 6-8 months.*

Squash (winter): keep for in a cool, dry environment, like a basement for 4 to 8 months *Freeze: Wash, slice, scoop out seeds, cook until soft, (oven, microwave, etc). Puree once cooked. 6-8 months.*

Strawberries: do not wash strawberries until ready to eat. Store in refrigerator for up 3 days. *Freeze: remove stem and caps. Wash and drain the fruit carefully. Do not soak in water! Freeze in a single layer on cookie sheets. When frozen place in storage containers. No blanching required.*

Sweet Potatoes: Do not wash. Store them in a single layer in an uncovered shallow box, preferably in a cold place. Plan on using within 1 week of purchase and do not refrigerate. *Freeze: Cook until almost tender (oven, steam, boil) pack in an airtight container, leaving 1/2-inch headroom. If desired, to prevent darkening, dip whole sweet potatoes or slices for 5 seconds in a solution of 1/2 cup lemon juice to 1 quart water. To keep mashed sweet potatoes from darkening, mix 2 tablespoons orange or lemon juice with each quart of mashed sweet potatoes. 10-12 months.*

Tomatillo: store in a paper bag in refrigerator for up to 4 weeks. *Freeze: remove husk, wash, dry. Place on baking sheet in freezer. Transfer to storage bags once frozen. Blanching not required. 8-12 months.*

Tomato: refrigeration is the enemy of the tomato as it nullifies flavour and turns the flesh mealy. Unwashed tomatoes can be stored out of direct sunlight, at room temperature for up to one week. Put in sun if requiring more ripening. If the temperature is too warm, refrigerate to slow down the ripening process. Remove from refrigerator 30-40 minutes before using to give the flavour a chance to adjust. *Freeze: blanch 30 seconds. 6-8 months.*

Turnip: remove tops and store the tops wrapped in a damp paper towel or plastic bag in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator. Refrigerate turnip unwashed in open or perforated plastic bags up to 3 weeks. *Freeze: blanch 2 min. 9-12 months.*

Watermelon: stored ripe melon in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Store cut watermelon wrapped tightly in fridge and used within a few days. To tell if it is ripe check the underside where it lies on the ground, it should be a pale yellow colour, not white or light green. If it is not quite ripe store at room temperature it will continue to ripen and soften, check daily. *Freeze: cut, freeze on cookie sheet, transfer to storage bag. 8-12 months.*

Zucchini: do not wash until just before you are ready to use it, store in a plastic in the refrigerator crisper drawer 4 to 5 days. *Freeze: blanch 2 min. 10-12 months.*