

# Drying Foods



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Dried fruits are delicious to eat- in addition to being nutritious treats. Another advantage is that dried foods take considerably less storage space than canned fruits and vegetables. Dried foods also add variety to the diet.

Drying is not difficult, but it does take time, some skill and understanding of food drying methods. Drying may be done in the oven, in a homemade or commercial dryer, or in the sunshine. Many people prefer to begin the drying process in the over, and let the sunshine finish the process.

Good quality dried fruits and vegetables depend on the use of ripe firm, good quality, fresh produce. Remember, fruits and vegetables that are inferior quality before drying will be inferior after drying. Apples, pears, peaches, apricots, berries, grapes, prunes, or plums are the best fruits for drying. Peas, carrots, green beans, pumpkins, squash, and green peppers are vegetables used most often for drying.

Some foods change color and flavor during the drying process. To decrease this, fruits may be dipped in a salt-water solution of 4 to 6 tablespoons of plain salt to one gallon of water for about 10 minutes to prevent discoloration. Another method is a sodium bisulfate wash which is 2 tablespoons sodium bisulfate per gallon of water. Vegetables should be steamed or plunged into boiling water for 5 minutes. They should be well-drained, dried with a towel and spread out to dry.

## The Oven Process

Trays made of hardware cloth stretched over a wood framework are most satisfactory. Make trays to fit over. Baking sheets may be used, but it is wise to cover with brown paper to prevent fruit discoloration.

Set one oven rack about 3 inches from the oven floor and the other just far enough for two trays to be stacked between. Let oven preheat for about 15 minutes at lowest temperature setting (150 degrees). Spread food evenly, 1-2 pounds per tray. The lighter load dries faster. Stack two loaded trays together, separated with wooden blocks so air can circulate between. Place one stack on each oven rack. Leave oven door propped open slightly. Every half hour stir and turn food on trays. Change place of top and bottom stacks and turn back to front.

The storage stability of dried foods: (A sodium bisulfate treatment will extend this lifetime)

One month 70 degrees Fahrenheit  
Four months 35 degrees Fahrenheit  
Twelve months 0 degrees Fahrenheit

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