

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

homemakers' chat

FOR USE IN NON-COMMERCIAL BROADCASTS ONLY

U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



RECEIVED

★ JUL 23 1942 ★

U. S. Department of Agriculture

TUESDAY, JULY 28, 1942

9
3Hh

QUESTION BOX

INFORMATION from

Is sun-drying successful way to preserve food?
Why sulfur dried fruit?
Steam or boiling water for precooking vegetables for drying?
Freeze fruit with no sugar?

home economists and chemists
of the U.S. Department of
Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

The important job of putting up food for the family is occupying many housewives these days, judging from the questions in the mailbag this week. Many of these letters ask about drying food and putting up food in freezer lockers.

For example, listen to this letter. It says: "For years now I have been canning hundreds of quarts of home-raised fruits, vegetables and meats every year. But with the wartime shortage of metal, rubber, sugar and no telling what next, I've been thinking the time might come when I might have trouble getting all the canning supplies I want. So I'm trying to learn all I can about other good ways to put up food beside canning. Will you tell me whether drying in the sun is a successful method?"

Home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture say that sun drying is successful for preserving some foods in some climates. The best fruits and vegetables for drying in the sun are rich in sugar or starch. The climate that is right for sun drying has dry air and bright sun day after day. Sun drying requires stretches of clear, dry, practically rainless days. In regions where the climate is often damp, dark or rainy, an attempt at sun drying may waste more food than it saves. For/damp dark weather food will mold or decay before it dries.

The best foods for drying are apples, apricots, blackberries, raspberries, cherries, peaches and plums. Fortunately, most of these fruits ripen at a time when

the weather is right for outdoor drying. The most satisfactory vegetable for sun drying is early maturing sweet corn. But corn, like other vegetables, is more delicious dried by indoor controlled heat than by the sun.

The home economists say you can dry food on an outdoor shelf, a roof that slopes toward the south, or on racks in sunny windows. You can spread out small lots of the food on clean boards, canvas, heavy wrapping paper, cheesecloth, or clean sacks held in place by laths. But even better are wire trays, window screens, or slat trays covered with thin cloth to keep the food from slipping through. These trays do a better job of drying because they let the air circulate under as well as over the food. Stir the food 2 or 3 times a day. Be sure to take it in at night so the dew won't dampen it. Also take it in when you see a shower coming.

You have the problem of keeping out insects in sun drying food. Use covers of cheesecloth, mosquito netting, or wire window screening for this purpose.

Now from this question about drying by sun, let's go on to one about sulphur and dried fruits. This second letter says "Is it all right to sulphur fruit before drying?"

Yes, say the scientists. Sulfuring is a good treatment for many fruits. Properly used, sulfuring is not harmful. It protects certain vitamins during drying, and it preserves natural fruit color and flavor. It also prevents souring of fruit, and helps keep off insects while the fruit is drying.

Now for Question No. 3, this one about the heat treatment vegetables have to have before you dry them. The letter says: "Which is better, steam or boiling water for precooking vegetables to be dried?"

Recent experiments show that as a rule vegetables precooked in steam are higher in food value than those precooked in boiling water. Dried vegetables that were precooked in steam also keep better, require less soaking before they are cooked for the table, and look and taste better.

For steaming vegetables before drying a steam pressure canner or a regular steamer is excellent. But you can use a large kettle or other deep container with a tight-fitting cover if you haven't a steam pressure canner or a steamer. Even an ordinary wash boiler or a large lard can will do if you fit it with a wire basket inside to hold the food, and a rack to hold the basket above the boiling water.

Though steam treatment seems to give the best results you can precook the vegetables in boiling water satisfactorily if you follow directions carefully. Work with small amounts of food at a time so the water does not cool down much. And to conserve vitamins and minerals in the vegetables, hold them in the boiling water only long enough to cook almost tender---and use the same water for several lots of food.

Now if you have more questions about putting up food by drying, or if you want more information, write to your State College or experiment station, or write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

Last question, this one about freezing rather than drying. A housewife asks: "Is it possible to freeze fruit in a freezer locker without using sugar? The directions I have call for dry sugar or sugar sirup."

The answer to that question is: Yes. You can put up some fruit in the freezer locker with no sweetening at all. Most berries except strawberries freeze successfully with no sugar or sweetening added. Other fruits you can freeze with corn sirup or mild flavored honey instead of sugar-sirup.

That's all the questions today. More coming up for answers on Thursday.

#

