



Dehydrating

Dehydrated fruits and vegetables are a nutritious snack and a great way to enjoy seasonal produce all year round. Even better – you can make them at home using your oven (or a dehydrator) and any extra ripe produce you have on hand.

Drying produce requires a bit of know-how, but it boils down to three steps:

1 PREPARE THE PRODUCE

2 THOROUGHLY WASH UNDER RUNNING WATER AND DRY

3 CURE

CHOOSING PRODUCE TO DRY

- Choose produce that is ripe or just overly ripe.
- If produce shows any visible blemishes, cut them off. They are still completely safe to dry.

When fruit is still on the tree (e.g. apricots, peaches, cherries), a large amount of rain can cause them to split and therefore go bad quickly. These are perfect candidates for drying!

DRYING BY THE SEASON

Process produce as soon as possible after harvest to help maintain nutrients.

MARCH

apples, kiwi, peppers

APRIL

peppers, tomatoes, apples

MAY

peas, peppers, tomatoes, apples

JUNE

broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, peas, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries, cherries, blueberries, zucchini, tomatoes

JULY

apricots, beans, blackberries, broccoli, cherries, corn, currants, nectarines, peppers, raspberries, zucchini

AUGUST

apricots, blueberries, cherries, corn, garlic, melon, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, strawberries

SEPTEMBER

apples, beans, broccoli, corn, cranberries, grapes, pears, plums, pumpkin, zucchini

OCTOBER

apples, carrots, cranberries, kiwi, pears, peppers, quince



PREPARATION

- Wash all produce in cold water.
- Remove any pits or stones. Small seeds (like apples) are okay, but larger ones will cause uneven drying.
- Remove stems from berries.
- **Optional:** Remove the skins. Some fruits with thick skins, like peaches, dry more evenly with the skins removed.
 - To remove skins, cut a large X in the bottom of each piece of fruit and plunge in boiling water for 30 seconds. Immediately transfer to a bowl of ice water. When cool, the skins will peel right off.
- Cut produce into equal sized slices so that they dry evenly. Slices should be 1/8" to 1/4" thick.
- To speed up drying time and help maintain colour, blanch hearty vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, corn, peas and potatoes in boiling water for 2-3 minutes (depending on the size) and then transfer to ice water to cool.
- To minimize discolouration, soak fruits prone to oxidation in water and lemon for 10 minutes. Use 1/4 cup of lemon juice for 4 cups of water. Remove from the soaking liquid and pat dry.
- **Optional:** Toss with salt, sugar, or spices.

Wash all produce in cold water

OVEN METHOD

You don't need any fancy equipment to dry fruits and vegetables – your oven will do.

- Drying times can vary dramatically based on thickness of slices, amount of water in the produce, temperature, humidity and altitude. The first few times you do it, watch carefully.
- Over-drying is OK, it just means the produce will be “crispy” instead of “chewy”. Under-drying means there is still moisture left, which leads to spoiling.
- Turn the oven on to its lowest setting: 54-71°C (130-160°F). If you have the ability to control the range at that low a temperature, use the coolest setting for thin slices like apples and peaches. Berries and tomatoes can handle slightly warmer temperature: 71°C (160°F).
- If your oven's lowest temperature is 93°C (200°F), don't worry – you can still dry produce. This higher temp means there is a greater risk of cooking the produce instead of dehydrating it, so make sure there is good air flow through the oven.
- Prop the oven door open to allow air to circulate. If you want to speed things up even more, point a small fan towards the crack in the oven door to help push out moisture.
- Line baking sheets with silicone mats or parchment paper. Arrange the fruit in a single layer; the closer together the pieces are, the longer they will take to dry.
- **Pro tip:** Reduce the drying time by putting a cooling rack on top of the sheet pans and laying the fruit on the rack, instead of directly on the pan. This can cut a couple of hours from the total drying time.
- Rotate the pans front-to-back and top-to-bottom every two hours. Drying is complete when the pieces feel like leather.
- **Pro tip:** If your oven doesn't have even heat or your slices are a bit thick, flip the fruit over half way through the drying process to encourage even drying.





TYPICAL OVEN DRYING TIMES:



Apples
6 hours



Apricots
12 hours



Bananas
6 hours



Cherries
12 hours



Citrus Peel
8-10 hours



Grapes
8-10 hours



Peaches
6 hours



Pears
6 hours



Plums
6 hours



Strawberries
12 hours

DEHYDRATOR METHOD

- Set the dehydrator to 60°C (140°F) (often labelled as the “fruit” setting).
- Spread the slices of produce out in a single layer on the dehydrator racks.
- The exact amount of time will vary depending on thickness of the slices and how wet the fruit/vegetables are to start with. Check after the first 12 hours and then every 6 hours after that.
- To check doneness, remove a piece and allow it to cool completely. When cool, it should feel dry and leathery.

THE FINAL STEP

- The final step, curing, ensures that there is no moisture left in the dried produce before you store it, which helps avoid spoilage.
- Allow fruit and vegetables to cool completely, then place in an open container on the counter for 4-5 days so any remaining moisture can evaporate. Shake the container daily.
- The cured produce will keep in a sealed container for about 10 months.