

more specialised professional technique described below is not unduly complex. It is believed that freezing preserves more essential vitamins than other methods

As a general rule vegetables are cleaned and cut to the size required; dropped into boiling water for up to two minutes (this is "blanching"); removed, drained and cooled rapidly in iced water. They are then packed tightly into plastic boxes or freezer bags; cooled completely in the normal refrigerator and finally stored in a freezer cabinet turned up to its maximum setting. Once frozen, this setting can be returned to normal running. Optimum storage times vary.

Below are a few tips for freezing common vegetables:

Beans: Wash, pat dry, cut off the ends, blanch for 3 minutes and put in freezer bags. The old method of salting is not considered suitable.

Cucumbers: Aren't suited to the usual freezing methods but can be frozen in brine.

Onions: Cut onions will only keep 3 days in the refrigerator. If you only

need half an onion for a recipe, dice the other half, tray freeze it and bag it for a quick addition to soups or stews.

Peppers: Wash, dry, cut off the stem end and remove the seeds and white membrane. Whole pepper cases for stuffed peppers can be blanched for 3 minutes, tray frozen and then packaged in plastic bags. Peppers can also be diced or cut into strips or rings, blanched for 2 minutes and frozen.

Summer Squash: Cut summer squash into rounds about a quarter of an inch (6 mm) thick, blanch for 3 minutes and freeze. These are great in mid-winter soups. For large overgrown courgettes: peel, grate, press out the liquid, and freeze in rigid plastic containers.

Tomatoes: Plum or paste tomatoes are best processed for canning in a boiling water bath. At a pinch, you can freeze whole, unpeeled tomatoes on a tray and repack in freezer bags when frozen. Use for sauces or soups, as their crisp texture never recovers from this arctic experience!

Strawberries: do not freeze well.

Raspberries: place on open trays so that they are not touching, and freeze



BRIDPORT AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY



Centre for Local Food,
Unit 17, St Michael's Trading Estate,
Foundry Lane,
Bridport DT6 3RR
Email: bridportadas@googlemail.com

Information Leaflet 4 Managing the Harvest

There are four steps to a successful harvest: proper garden planning, timing when to pick, storing vegetables to keep them fresh and choosing the right method to preserve the crop's flavour

Planning for a Successful Harvest

1. The first step to a successful harvest is to plan your plot. Determine the desired yield for each vegetable. Don't grow more than you and your family, friends and neighbours, can eat.

2. The second step also starts at the planning stage. Choose several varieties of the same vegetable that mature at different times. Plant early, mid season, and late season varieties of tomatoes, for example, to stagger the harvest. This not only provides you with fresh tomatoes throughout the growing season, but it keeps you from having more tomatoes than you can eat, process, or give away at any given time.

Successive plantings of a single crop can accomplish the same purpose: for example, planting a half-row of lettuce every two to three weeks. Another option is to select varieties that bear over a long period of time

rather than all at once, such as pole beans.

3. Even if you've planned ahead and spread out the harvest, there will still be times when you have more produce to harvest than you can eat or have time to process. At a pinch, you can tray freeze many vegetables, and it is worth purchasing a specialist book on the subject if you want to get the best out of this technique.

However, here is some brief information for a quick and easy method for short term storage

Tray Freezing

If you're pressed for time, tray freezing is a quick alternative to traditional freezing methods. Wash and dry the vegetables, cut them up (the smaller the pieces; the quicker they'll freeze), spread them out in a shallow pan and freeze. Once they're frozen, pour them into freezer bags. Use within 2 months, preferably in sauces or stews.

Time to Harvest

In general, try to harvest during the coolest part of the day - either early morning or late afternoon. Harvest when crops are dry.

If you're harvesting a vegetable for fresh

eating, pick it just before a mealtime: this preserves its flavour and nutrients, (the sugars in a vegetable start turning to starch within minutes of harvesting.) Pick an ear of corn and pop it straight into the cooking pot, for example, for optimum sweetness. If you're harvesting a vegetable for preserving; harvest it as soon before processing as possible.

Canning and bottling in glass jars are both highly effective techniques which have stood the test of time, but each have their risks to health if not carried out meticulously, and it is suggested that you should obtain a specialist book on the subject if you want to try them for yourself.

Root vegetables are usually stored for winter use in boxes of clean damp sand, although some can be left in the ground until needed, although they may be attacked by pests. Shelled beans can be sun or low oven dried, and hopefully, onions and shallots will have been dried in the last of the long days of summer sunlight. Cauliflowers, cabbage and sprout stems can be hung upside down in a dry, airy shed

The easy freezing method described above is not difficult, and even the