



Home Freezing of Vegetables

Freezing is one of the easiest, most convenient and least time-consuming methods of preserving foods. Freezing keeps the natural color, fresh flavor and nutritive qualities of most foods better than other known methods of preservation. Although freezing does not sterilize food, the extreme cold retards the growth of microorganisms and slows down chemical changes that affect quality or cause food to spoil.

Top Quality Frozen Vegetables

To maintain top quality, frozen vegetables should be stored at 0°F or lower. Most refrigerator-freezer combinations and separate freezer units should have no trouble in maintaining this temperature. A freezer thermometer can help you determine the actual temperature of your freezer. These thermometers are relatively inexpensive and generally available at hardware or grocery stores. To prevent loss of quality and nutrients, freezing must be rapid. Therefore, it is best not to freeze vegetables in containers with a capacity over one-half gallon as the foods freeze too slowly to result in a satisfactory product.

The selection of containers depends on the type of food to be frozen, personal preference and availability of certain types. There are two types of packaging materials for home use: rigid containers and flexible freezer bags or wrappings.

Rigid Containers

- Suitable for all packs and especially good for liquid packs

- Often reusable

- Make stacking of foods easier

If using glass jars, choose wide-mouth, dual-purpose jars made for freezing and canning. These jars have been tempered to withstand extremes in temperatures.

Covers for rigid containers should fit tightly. If they do not, freezer tape can be used to reinforce the seal.

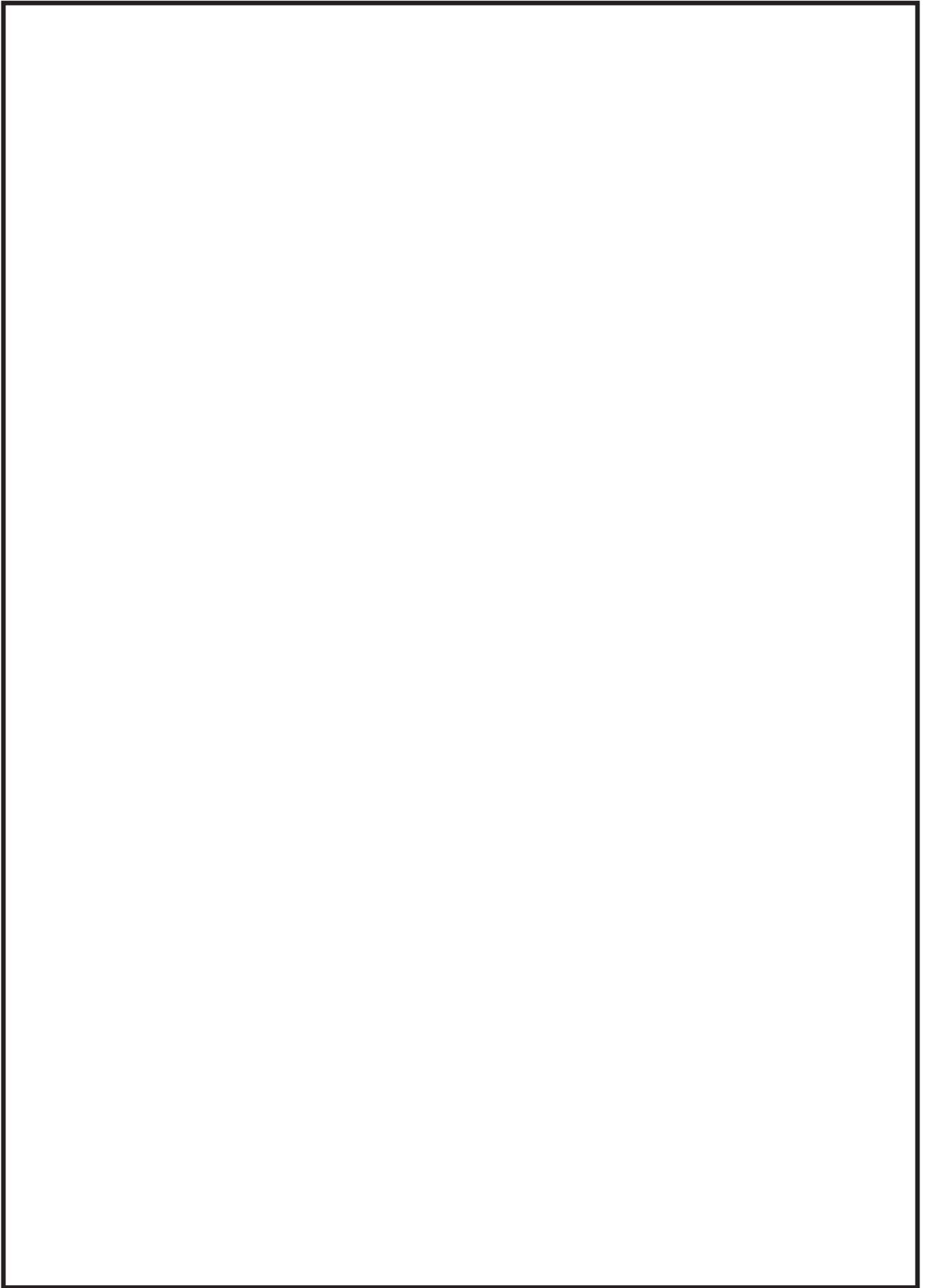
Flexible Freezer Bags or Wrapping Materials

Dry-packed products with little or no liquid and foods with irregular shapes can be preserved using flexible freezer bags or wrappings. Wrapping materials include

- plastic freezer wrap,
- freezer paper, and
- heavy-weight aluminum foil.

Plastic freezer bags are available in a variety of sizes and work well for liquid packs. Use bags labeled for freezer use. Regular storage bags are thinner and suitable for short-term refrigerator storage only. When packaging, make sure to eliminate air pockets. Press out and seal. Carefully follow the directions that come with the vacuum sealer. To avoid the risk of botulism from some vacuum-packaged foods, keep foods frozen until ready to use.

- Made of plastic or glass



Preparing Vegetables for Freezing

For best results, products should be frozen as quickly as possible. To facilitate more rapid freezing, set the temperature control of your freezer at the coldest setting several hours before foods will be placed in the freezer. Some freezer manuals indicate the location of the coldest shelves in the freezer and suggest placing products on these shelves.

Prior to loading the freezer, check the freezer manual for instructions on recommended amounts of unfrozen product that

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7. After cooling, lift the vegetables out of the cold water. Let them drain in the blanching basket or transfer to a colander. Drain vegetables thoroughly after cooling. Extra moisture can cause a loss of quality when vegetables are frozen.
8. Package prepared vegetables in the storage container of your choice. If using rigid freezer containers, leave $\frac{1}{2}$ inch headspace to allow for the food to expand. Headspace is not needed for loosely packed foods such as broccoli spears.
9. Label bags or containers with a waterproof marker. List the name of the product, the amount of product (cups, ounces or pounds) and the date processed.
10. Place packages in the freezer. Arrange them loosely or in a single layer so they freeze quickly. Home-frozen vegetables have a storage time of 8 to 12 months when properly packaged and stored at 0°F. After this time, the food should still be safe, yet quality may be affected.

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