

Fall is a great time to think about storing/freezing/canning items to enjoy over the winter. With the farmers market abundant in fresh veggies, now is that time!

It is always a good idea to remember some safe practices for this process. This week, we will go over some of those practices and give you a few recipes to enjoy now ... and later!

Easy Refrigerator Pickles

6 C. thinly sliced cucumbers
2 C. thinly sliced onions
1-1/2 C. sugar
1-1/2 C. cider vinegar
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. mustard seed
1/2 tsp. celery seed
1/2 tsp. ground turmeric
1/2 tsp. ground cloves

Place cucumbers and onions in a large bowl; set aside. Combine remaining ingredients in a saucepan; bring to a boil. Cook and stir just until the sugar is dissolved. Pour over cucumber mixture; cool. Cover tightly and refrigerate for at least 24 hours before serving.

How to Freeze Corn Off the Cob

Husk corn and remove silk.

Make sure you do your best to get all the hair (silk) off.

While the corn is being husked, start boiling water in a large stockpot. Blanch your corn 3-5 cobs at a time, depending on the size of the corn and the size of your pot.

Plunge the cobs in boiling water for 5-6 minutes, depending on the size of the cob.

Start counting your time as soon as the cobs enter the water. Do not wait for the water to come to a boil again. Remove cobs with tongs. Place immediately into a sink or pot of ice water to cool and stop the cooking process. Allow the corn to sit in the water for at least 2 minutes. Keep this water cold, adding ice if necessary. Remove the cobs from the cold water and allow to drain.

Cut the kernels from the cob by setting the cob on end and running your knife down the sides, cutting off the kernels. (Try not to cut into the cob. aim for getting off about 3/4 of the kernel.) use a large cookie sheet or cake pan to catch the kernels.

Be warned...it is messy. The kernels will spit juicy goodness all over. You might even want to do this outside on a tabletop or somewhere you can clean up easily.

Place the corn into freezer bags. Remove as much air as possible, seal, label, and freeze.

Place bags in the freezer in single layers. This allows the corn to freeze quickly.

Garlic Butter Fried Corn

Prep Time: 10 min.

Cook Time: 5 min.

Total Time: 15 min.

Servings: 4

1 lb. corn kernels – fresh or frozen
4 T. unsalted butter
2 cloves garlic minced
2 T. freshly chopped parsley
1/4 C. grated parmesan cheese – use the real stuff!

Note: if using frozen corn– Rinse the frozen corn in a mesh strainer with cold water. Once the ice melts, stop the water and shake the kernels really well. Shake all the water off before cooking.

Add the corn to a large, non-stick skillet and place the butter on top of it. Set the heat to medium-high and stir until the butter starts to melt. Toss in the minced garlic and cook, stirring frequently, for another two minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the parsley. Season to taste with salt and pepper and sprinkle the parmesan cheese on top. Serve warm.

Freeze Peas the Right Way

Before freezing fresh peas, it's important to wash them to remove any dirt or debris. Whether you should remove them from the pod or leave them whole depends on the variety you have.

You can freeze snow or sugar snap varieties whole without shelling them. However, you should always remove English peas from their pods first.

To shell them, simply pop open the pod with your fingers. Then run a finger down the inside of the pod to remove them, as you guide them into a bowl.

You don't have to blanch peas before freezing them, but it is ideal. Blanching locks in the flavor, helps to retain the color and texture, and can help to extend their shelf life by a few months. Blanching peas is simple. All you need to do is flash-cook them in boiling water for 1 to 1-1/2 minutes.

Then move them to an ice cold water bath immediately afterwards to stop the cooking process, and allow them to cool completely.

If you have snow or sugar snap, you can leave them whole because the pods are edible and have a softer structure to them.

Leaving them whole saves some time compared to shelling. These are great for tossing into stir fries and other recipes, and you don't even have to thaw them first.

English peas require shelling before you can freeze them because their pods are tough and inedible

Flash freezing all you need to do is spread them evenly on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, and place it in the freezer for an hour, or until they feel firm to the touch.

The best way to store frozen peas is using zip-top freezer bags. Once you have filled them, gently press out any excess air before sealing them so they take up less space.

Then you can simply store them flat and stack them in your freezer.

Blanched frozen peas can last for up to a year in the freezer. If you choose to not blanch them, they will only last for about 2-3 months.

Marinated Vegetable Salad

Level: Easy

Total: 1 day 35 min. (includes cooling and marinating times)

Active: 20 min.

Servings: 8-10

1 C. sugar

1 C. red wine vinegar

1/2 C. olive oil

1 tsp. salt

16 oz. frozen cut green beans, defrosted and drained, or fresh green beans

16 oz. frozen green peas, defrosted and drained, or fresh shelled green peas

1-1/2 C. thinly chopped celery (about 4 stalks)

One 2-oz. jar chopped pimientos

2 sm. sweet onions, thinly sliced

1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded and chopped

Bring the sugar and vinegar to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add the oil and salt and set aside to cool.

Add to a bowl the green beans, peas, celery, pimientos, onions and bell peppers. Pour the vinegar mixture over the vegetables, cover with plastic wrap and marinate in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

Serve with a slotted spoon to drain the excess oil.

Freezing Tomatoes

Whole tomatoes tend to crack and collapse when they thaw. To successfully freeze fresh raw tomatoes, you can:

Slice tomatoes into at least 1/2-inch slices. Put slices on a cookie sheet and freeze for 2 hours. Remove slices and put them into freezer bags or containers.

OR slice tomatoes into at least 1/2-inch slices. Package in a rigid airtight container and fast freeze.

OR wash tomatoes. Dip whole tomatoes in boiling water for 30 seconds to loosen skins. Core and peel. Freeze whole or in pieces. Pack into containers, leaving 1-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

Tomatoes will not be solid when thawed and are best used in cooking. Frozen sliced tomatoes should be eaten in a near-frozen state for fresh taste.

Fresh Tomato Sauce

Prep Time: 10 min.

Cook Time: 15 min.

Total Time: 25 min.

1-1/2 to 2 lbs. fresh (or frozen) tomatoes, preferably San Marzano or Roma

3 T. extra virgin olive oil

2 or 3 cloves of fresh garlic

1 T. chopped fresh Italian parsley

1 to 2 tsp. Kosher or sea salt

fresh, torn basil leaves

For a smooth sauce: You can simply blend the tomatoes whole, just remove the core, and/or the seeds and skin. Blanch the fresh tomatoes in a pot of boiling water for 45 seconds to peel them easily. For frozen tomatoes, rinse them and the skins will come off easily.

Scoop or squeeze out the seeds, then cut the tomatoes and process in a blender until smooth. This will make the tomatoes more pale in color, but it won't affect the flavor.

For a chunky sauce: Choose whether you want to remove the seeds and skin, and chop into small pieces.

Cook the sauce: Put the oil into a sauté pan over medium high heat, then add the garlic (smash it under the flat blade of a large knife).

Then add the chopped parsley, but make sure it's dry or the water will make the oil squirt, so keep the lid handy, but don't keep the lid on.

When the garlic starts to brown, quickly add the tomatoes and cover with a lid to keep the squirting inside the pan, once it stops, remove the lid as quickly as possible. Stir with a wooden spoon, and keep it simmering quickly (don't lower the heat too much). Add the salt.

This sauce cooks quickly, so you need to keep the lid off and stir often while it simmers/boils as there's a lot of water that needs to evaporate, especially if using frozen tomatoes.

When the sauce is thickened, after about 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the tomatoes used, taste and add salt if needed, then throw in some torn fresh basil leaves. Stir and turn off the heat.

Your sauce is now ready to use with pasta or whatever you want to use it for.

Easy Pickled Apples

*Prep/Cook Time: 15 min. + chilling.
Servings: 8*

1 lb. med. apples, cored (3 apples)
1/2 C. water
1/2 C. honey
1/2 C. white wine vinegar
3 whole star anise
3 cardamom pods
2 cinnamon sticks (3 inches)
1 tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. whole allspice
1 to 2 bay leaves
1 tsp. whole peppercorns

With a mandoline or vegetable peeler, cut apples into very thin slices. Place apples in a 1-quart jar. In a large saucepan, bring remaining ingredients to a boil. Carefully ladle hot liquid over apples. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Quote of the Week:

“Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.”

~ Albert Camus