



Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe

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What if my canned foods freeze?

In the winter months, basements and other food storage areas may get much colder than expected when a heat source fails, a door or window is accidentally left open or for some other reason. For best quality, canned foods should be stored at temperatures between 50°F and 70°F in a dark, dry place. However, if the canned foods do freeze accidentally, they can still be safe to use as long as the jars do not become unsealed. However, foods that have been frozen and thawed may soften.

So if you notice that your canned foods did freeze, check to be sure that the jars are still safely sealed. If they became unsealed, throw the food away—it could have gotten contaminated through the broken seal and might make people sick. If the seals are still good, they are still safe to use, although the final product may be softer than usual.

If you do store canned foods where you know they may freeze, wrap the jars in newspapers, place them in heavy cartons and cover them with more newspapers and blankets to help prevent freezing.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation
http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/store/store_home_canned.html



Citrus in season!

During the winter months, citrus fruit is a refreshing treat when served with a bowl of hot soup. Citrus fruits are typically harvested between October and June, and are at the height of harvest and most plentiful in February. While citrus fruits are typically eaten fresh, they can also be preserved in a variety of ways. Warm up your kitchen and take advantage of the abundance of citrus fruit at lower prices this winter with these options.

- **Canning** – Instructions for canning grapefruit and orange sections can be found at http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_02/grapefruit_orange.html.
- **Freezing** – Citrus fruits can be frozen with a syrup pack, in their own juice, with a little sugar or without any sugar. Instructions can be found at <http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze/citrus.html>.
- **Drying** – Citrus peels add refreshing flavor to beverages and sweet treats, such as cookies. Peels of citron, grapefruit, lime, lemon, tangelo and tangerine can be dried with no pretreatment. Thicker peels dry best. Wash thoroughly. Remove the white bitter pith. Dry in a dehydrator 8-12 hours.
- **Orange jelly** – If you haven't tried this, you should! It's even easier using frozen orange juice concentrate. http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_07/orange_jelly.html.
- **Spiced orange jelly** – This is a spicy treat that uses fresh orange and lemon juice. http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_07/orange_jelly_spiced.html.
- **Apricot-orange conserve** – This fruit and nut combination uses canned or dried apricots and oranges. It is thickened by cooking instead of added pectin. http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_07/apricot_orange_conserve.html.



Preserving winter squash

Winter squash keeps well for several months in cold storage, but canning and freezing helps us enjoy them out of season!

Because the growing conditions for squash create the perfect environment for surface bacteria, it is necessary to wash the squash thoroughly before taking a knife through the skin. Scrub squash with a vegetable brush under cool running water before cutting and cooking. Do not use soap or detergent.

Freezing squash

To freeze squash as a puree or sauce, cook it in boiling water until it's soft. It may also be steamed, cooked in a pressure cooker or baked in an oven. Remove the pulp from the rind and mash. For a smoother sauce, put it through a food mill, blender or food processor. Spaghetti squash does not need to be mashed. To cool, place the pan that contains the squash in cold water, stirring occasionally. Freeze the squash in amounts that are easily used for recipes, using rigid plastic containers or freezer jars and leaving headspace for expansion.

Squash also can be packed in zip-close freezer bags that have had any excess air removed and been placed flat on a tray to freeze. They'll be easier to stack when they're frozen and will thaw more quickly, as well. An easy way to remove thawed squash from a freezer bag is to clip a corner and push the puree out as you would from a frosting bag.

Some stir-fry and skillet recipes and casseroles call for cubes of butternut squash. Blanch washed and peeled cubes of raw squash for 3 minutes—just until heated through—then drain and chill them in cold water. Keep the blanched cubes in a colander while chilling to prevent them from breaking apart. Drain the squash cubes thoroughly and spread them in a single layer on trays. Freeze the squash. When the cubes are completely frozen, put them in freezer bags or containers. The frozen cubes can be added directly to your recipe.

Canning squash

Because winter squash are low-acid foods, the only safe canning method is pressure canning. Cut the peeled product into 1-inch cubes, and add them to boiling water; cook them for 2 minutes, and then pack the hot cubes into hot jars; and fill the jars with boiling hot cooking liquid. Allow 1 inch of headspace. Process at 11 pounds pressure in a dial gauge pressure canner, or at 10 pounds pressure in a weighted gauge pressure canner. Process pints for 55 minutes and quarts for 90 minutes. Do not can mashed or pureed pumpkin, because the puree is too dense for heat to adequately penetrate the jar during processing. Spaghetti squash is not suitable for canning.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation

Citrus in season! (continued)

- **Citrus marmalade** – Grapefruit, orange and lemon add zing to this marmalade, which is particularly tasty on muffins or biscuits. http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_07/citrus_marmalade.html.
- **Cranberry marmalade** – Cranberries and citrus are a perfect pair! Try this recipe, which features fresh oranges, lemon and cranberries. http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_07/cranberry_marmalade_powder.html.
- **Lemon or lime curd** – Add some European flair to your breakfast or dessert! This recipe uses bottled lemon or lime juice due to their standardized acid content. Do not use fresh lemon or lime juice in this recipe because their acid content is variable. http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_02/lemon_curd.html.



- **Candied citrus peel** – Candied citrus peel can satisfy your sweet tooth. Dip part of the candied peel in some melted dark chocolate for a decadent treat. <http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/files/226102.pdf>.

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