



Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe

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Garlic Spinach

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound frozen chopped spinach
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- ½ cup chicken broth
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon fresh pepper

Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Heat olive oil in a large skillet, and add spinach and garlic powder.
3. Stir for 2 minutes; then add chicken broth or your liquid of choice.
4. Add salt and pepper.
5. Bring to a simmer and allow liquid to evaporate a bit, about 5 minutes.
6. Serve warm. Refrigerate leftovers immediately.

Adapted from Foodlets, <http://foodlets.com/2015/01/30/simple-sides-frozen-spinach-garlic-powder-olive-oil/>



Preserving Greens

Greens are excellent sources of vitamin A, calcium, folic acid and fiber. Preserve spinach, collards, kale and other spring greens by freezing, pressure canning or dehydrating them.

Freezing greens

Though greens may be canned for long-term storage, freezing provides a better product. Select young, tender green leaves. Wash leaves thoroughly and cut off woody stems. Water blanch collard greens for 3 minutes and all other greens for 2 minutes. Cool promptly, drain and package, leaving ½ inch of headspace. Seal and freeze in amounts typically used in a favorite recipe (e.g., 2 cups).

Pressure canning spinach and other greens

Can only freshly harvested greens. Discard wilted, discolored, diseased or insect-damaged leaves. Leaves should be tender and attractive in color. Roughly 28 pounds of greens makes a canner load of 7 quarts; approximately 18 pounds makes about 9 pints.

Prepare only according to hot pack procedure: Wash greens in small amounts. Drain water, and continue rinsing until water is clear and free of grit. Cut out tough stems and midribs. Place 1 pound of greens at a time in a cheesecloth bag or blancher basket, and steam 3 to 5 minutes or until they're well wilted. Add ½ teaspoon of salt to each quart jar, if desired. Fill jars loosely with greens and add fresh boiling water, leaving an inch of headspace. Place lids on the jars, and process them according to the directions in the source listed below.

Dehydrating greens

Use only young, tender leaves. Wash and trim them thoroughly. Steam or water blanch the greens. To steam blanch, use a deep pot with a close-fitting lid and a wire basket, colander or sieve placed so that steam will circulate freely around the greens. Add water to the pot and bring it to a rolling boil. Loosely place the greens in the basket or colander, which should be no more than 2 inches deep. Place the basket of greens in the pot. Make sure the water does not come into contact with the greens. Cover and steam for 2–2½ minutes. To water blanch, fill a large pot two-thirds full of water, cover it and bring the water to a rolling boil. Place greens in a wire basket or colander, and submerge them in the water. Cover the pot, bring the water back to a boil and blanch for 1½ minutes.

Preserving Greens (continued)

After blanching, dip the greens briefly in cold water just long enough to stop them from cooking. Do not cool to room temperature. When greens feel only slightly hot to the touch, they'll be at about 120 degrees F. Drain greens by pouring them directly onto a drying tray held over a sink. Wipe excess water from beneath the tray, and arrange the greens in a single layer. Place tray immediately in a dehydrator or oven. Dry for 8 to 10 hours. Watch greens closely at the end of the drying period so that they do not scorch. The end product should be brittle.

Source: Andress, Elizabeth, and Judy Harrison, eds. 2014. So easy to preserve. 6th ed. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

Why You Shouldn't Can Like Grandma Did

"Vintage" may be trendy, but there are good reasons why you shouldn't can like your grandmother did. When it comes to food preservation, older isn't better. Using up-to-date canning equipment, procedures and resources is important for quality and safety.

Your rusty, warped water bath canners and heavy old pressure canners may not work well with—and may actually damage—modern ranges, and replacement parts may be difficult or impossible to find. Other old-fashioned methods like open kettle canning or canning in the oven or sun might produce a seal, but food can spoil or become contaminated without proper heat processing. So-called canning powders are useless as preservatives, and don't replace the need for proper heat processing, either.

Foods have changed over time, too. Some tomato varieties now have a lower acidity than in Grandma's day, and need additional acid for canning. So have canning recommendations. They were significantly changed in 1994, so recipes older than that may no longer be safe.

Simply put, it's time to update your old canning methods to those that scientific research has proven reliable, consistent and safe.

Some things get better with age, but not old-fashioned canning methods and equipment. Grandma would probably change her ways if she were canning in the 21st century. You should, too.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation, http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/general/equip_methods_not_recommended.html

Safe Modifications for Canning

You can safely modify canning recommendations if you keep some safety tips in mind. Most importantly, **always** use a recipe—from such sources as the USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning or any university extension publication—that is tested and up to date.

Safety rules for other common canning recipe changes include:

Reducing salt. All plain vegetables, tomato products and meat products have salt added solely for flavor. The salt is not critical for safety. But reducing the amount of salt in quick-process pickles will lead to poor-quality pickles that spoil quickly. All fermented foods such as sauerkraut and dill pickles require salt for safety.

Reducing sugar. All plain fruits, tomato products or quick-process pickles will remain safe if you reduce the amount of sugar you use. However, the quality of these foods will be poor, and they will spoil more quickly.

Salsa changes. Any kind of pepper, onion or tomato can be used for salsa as long as you use the ingredient amounts listed in the recipe for each produce type. Do not alter the amounts of any acidic ingredients, such as vinegar or lemon juice. And do not add or substitute corn or black beans in any salsa recipe.

See <http://fyi.uwex.edu/safepreserving/2013/09/11/safe-preserving-safe-modifications-to-canning-recipes/> for more information.

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