

Dehydration Tips

Preparing Food

1. Try to slice or cut food all the same size so it will dry at approximately the same time. Make thin, flat cuts.
2. Don't slice food too thin. 1/4-1/2 " thickness is perfect.
3. The larger the cut area, the faster and better the food dehydrates since moisture escapes best from a cut or broken surface.
4. Thin stalked vegetables like green beans, asparagus or rhubarb should be cut in half the long way or with an extreme diagonal cut. Fruit should be sliced across the core. Place these cut side up on the tray.
5. Small fruits like strawberries can be cut in half, while even smaller berries should either be cut in half or blanched slightly to break the skin.
6. Waxy skinned fruits (i.e. – cherries, grapes, plums and blueberries must have their skins poked or pitted and will take 1-2 days to dehydrate depending on their size.
7. The peel of fruits and vegetables contain much of the nutritional value. It is better not to peel, if the dried food is to be eaten as a snack. If you are using apples in a pie or tomatoes for soup you will want to peel before dehydrating.
8. Once food has been cut or sliced fill the drying trays by arranging slices in a single layer with a little space between slices. Some tray holes must always be left uncovered for good air circulation.
9. Some foods vegetables, like beans, corn, peas and broccoli must be steam blanched before drying. Steam blanching may take from 30 – 90 seconds.
10. Fruits that turn brown when exposed to air, (apples, peaches, bananas or pears) can be dipped in solutions of orange, pineapple or lemon juice or ascorbic acid or approximately two minutes prior to drying. Drain on paper towel before placing on tray.

Filling Trays

1. Food shrinkage during dehydration may cause smaller foods to fall through holes in the drying trays. To prevent this from happening, line trays with mesh inserts.
2. To dry chopped or shredded foods, spread on mesh inserts. Food should not be spread thicker than 3/8 inch. Use a fork to expose the mesh insert in several places to provide proper air circulation.
3. Some foods such as very ripe tomatoes, citrus or sugared fruits may drip. After placing food on drying trays tap tray firmly on a towel to remove excess moisture. To catch remaining overflow, use fruit leather sheets on the bottom two trays.

Alternate sheets on one half or each of the bottom trays. When the food stops dripping, remove the fruit leather sheets from the bottom two trays.

4. Do not cover the center hole in the lid or trays.
5. Chili, stews, casseroles, etc may be dried on fruit leather sheets and stored up to 3 months.

Dehydration Process

1. There is not a set time limit for drying foods. It depends on the type of food, how thick it is sliced, and the amount of water in the food.
2. When food is dried the flavors and sugars concentrate so the dried food has a much stronger flavor than fresh.
3. When using more than 4 trays periodic rotation will give optimum results.
4. Do not add seasonings or spices to vegetables until they are reconstituted and cooked.

Storing Dried Foods

1. Allow dehydrated food to cool thoroughly.
2. Dried food should be stored in a cool dry, dark place.
3. Use clean, air-tight and moisture-proof containers. Do not use cloth bags, lightweight plastic bags, bread wrappers or any container without a air-tight fitting lid. Heavy, zippered plastics bags or heat sealed bags are excellent.
4. Dried fruits and vegetables should not be stored longer than one year. Dried meats, fish, poultry or jerky should be used within a month or two.
5. Many vegetables may be powdered. Tomatoes powdered and added to water make great tomato sauce for pizzas, etc.

Reconstitution

1. To reconstitute most foods soak in water 15 minutes to 2 hours depending on the size, and use. Foods that take longest to dehydrate will take the longest to reconstitute.
2. Liquid from reconstituting food has great nutritional value. Use in soups, leathers, pies, etc.
3. To reconstitute chili or stew add hot water and let sit 15 minutes.