

## Fill Your Pantry Webinar Series

Drying at Home

June 24, 2020

Chat Box Q&A

Question	Answer
What is the website? What is the organization?	National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP) at <a href="https://nchfp.uga.edu/">https://nchfp.uga.edu/</a>
Can you dehydrate without a dehydrator? Will we get directions on that here?	Yes, there are options for air drying and drying with an oven and microwave. Sun drying is not recommended in most areas of the country due to incompatible temperature, humidity, and other factors.  Visit NCHFP for more information, and handouts that will be sent at a later point.
What about convection (ovens)?	In oven drying, the oven door is propped open a few inches and an external fan helps to circulate the air. If you have a convection oven with a fan built in, this may not be possible as the fan usually stops rotating when the oven door is open.
Air fryers?	If an air fryer is able to reach 140°F, it might work to dry foods. Check manufacturer instructions for information on this.
Are you going to go into information on solar dryers?	We did not cover solar drying or dryers in this lesson. Learn more from UC Davis and South Dakota State University: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Concentrated solar drying of tomatoes</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Drying fruits and vegetables with a chimney solar dryer</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Solar Drying of Fruits and Vegetables</a></li> </ul>
Lower or higher temp 85F? (in sun drying) The one slide said 85f or higher but you said below 85f or lower?	Higher  Apologies. Slip of the tongue.
I dried onions. They were flexible, but not crisp. I had to dry them in my dehydrator for another 14-16 hours until they were brittle. Did I do something wrong that it took 24 hours to dry my onions?	The speed a food dries may vary based on humidity, temperature, type of dehydrator, etc. Sometimes drying may go more quickly or more slowly than expected. That is okay. The goal is to reach 10% moisture in vegetables, which feels brittle to the touch.
Can you over dehydrate items? To the point that it's no longer safe? Or edible? Can you overdry items? If you're going to make powders or dried herbs for cooking, can you overdry?	Over drying may result in a lower quality product. For example, dried apples that are crunchy, rather than chewy. Unless there is outside contamination, over dried foods should still be safe to eat.

Is there an instrument to measure moisture content?	Yes, but these are often limited to use in laboratory settings.
If you have to rehydrate, is there a time period where you waited too long and should just toss the product?	When rehydrating – or reconstituting – foods, if the food takes longer than 2 hours to rehydrate, be sure to cover and refrigerate. Rehydrated foods should be treated like fresh, meaning they can no longer be stored at room temperature.
Where do you get the Vitamin C and Citric acid needed for pre-treatment of fruit? Is the Vitamin C in liquid form, or what?	Most pharmacies or pharmacy sections of stores will have tablets of vitamin C you can crush at home. Powdered vitamin C may also be available. Citric acid powder may be available wherever you buy canning supplies.
Boil whole potato, not sliced?	Sliced
Can you marinate mushrooms and then dehydrate?	Yes
How long do you boil the jerky and marinade before drying to reduce risk of foodborne illness?	Boil jerky in the marinade for 5 minutes before draining and drying.
I boil my corn on the cob for 3 minutes to eat. Wouldn't you have mushy corn at 4-7 minutes of blanching?	The corn may become mushy. The 4-7 minutes are based on recommendations from the NCHFP.
Are there certain foods that are good to eat once rehydrated versus those that are not good to eat alone but are good to use for cooking?	Rehydrated fruits may be enjoyed alone. Dried vegetables could be rehydrated and eaten alone, but might be more enjoyable when used in a recipe, such as soup.
What about using sealing bags?	The lesson mentions using glass or plastic containers for storing dried foods. Yes, zip-top bags or other sealable food-safe plastic bags could be used.
Do you need to remove the skins from tomatoes before dehydrating?	University of Minnesota Extension recommends removing skins of tomatoes before drying: <a href="https://extension.umn.edu/preserving-and-preparing/how-dry-tomatoes-home">https://extension.umn.edu/preserving-and-preparing/how-dry-tomatoes-home</a>
If jerky is not pre or post treated, can it be kept in refrigerator and if so for how long?	Refrigeration does not stop bacterial growth – or the growth of other microorganisms – so refrigeration of jerky that has not been treated with heat is not recommended.
I have a bounty of peppermint and oregano to dry. Do with or without stems?	The drying process will be easier with the stems still attached to the peppermint and oregano leaves.
Can you dehydrate sweet peppers and should they be chopped first?	Yes, the NCHFP recommends remove core and seeds and cut into 1/4 to 1/2” strips or rings.
When dehydrating hot peppers for hot pepper flakes, do you split the peppers open?	Let the peppers dry whole. Then cut off the tops/stems, collect seeds, and pulse the dried flesh in a food processor. Combine the seeds and the chopped flesh to make hot pepper flakes. Hot peppers may be irritating to skin, so wearing disposable gloves is recommended.

Can you dehydrate different items in your dehydrator?	Yes. Be aware that flavors can mix. For example, drying onions and apples together may lead to the apples having a light oniony flavor.
I heard if you eat it raw you don't need to blanch first, is this true?	It might be a good "rule of thumb" but does not consistently work. For example, carrots can be eaten raw, but should be blanched before drying
We dry very hot peppers (like ghost peppers). Is there anything special we should do to prevent us from coughing and sneezing from the oils in the air during the drying process?	Air drying of hot peppers should not release volatile oils – which cause the irritation of mucus membranes, like the nose or eyes – because the peppers are dried whole. Once cutting into dried hot peppers, consider wearing disposable gloves and a face mask if desired.
Can passive solar dryers be a good option?	There is little information across the Cooperative Extension system on passive solar drying. These appear to be used in commercial farming, not a consumer level.  Read more about it at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Drying rates of some fruits and vegetables with passive solar dryers</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">An Introduction to Herb Dryers</a></li> </ul>
I've dehydrated chives before, whole stems/leaves. What can you do to chop them so they don't get all statically? Can you dry them prechopped in a nut bag?	We could find no references about static related to dried herbs.
What is THE best way to preserve herbs?	Whatever method is most comfortable for you to do.
When you preserve strawberries or raspberries, do you slice them first?	Larger strawberries may be sliced before drying. Raspberries do not need to be cut before drying.
Can you dry canned vegetables?	Yes. Though the final product may have poorer colors and flavors than drying from fresh. As well, if rehydrating canned vegetables that are then dried, the rehydrated vegetables may also have poor color, flavor, and texture.
Can u dry meats that have been in the freezer?	Yes.