

Resources

www.pickyourrown.org

www.thefarm.org/charities/14at/surv/dryguide.htm

Dry It-You'll Like It

by Gen MacManiman, 1997

Beginner's Guide to Preserving Food at Home

by Janet Chadwick, 2009

Dehydrating for Food and Fun

by Una Jean W Peterson, 1977

Home Preserving Made Easy

by Vera Gewanter and Dorothy Parker, 1976

Dehydrating your fruit harvest is simple!

The goal is to remove water, which slows the deterioration process. Once dried, food continues to deteriorate at a very slow rate. If not enough water is removed, the food spoils; if too much water is removed, you get hard, brittle food or 'chips'.

Timing & Preparation

Plan your start time according to the drying time needed. If something will need to dry for 12-16 hours, start in the evening so it can dry overnight. For example, thick pieces, like plum or apricot halves, should be started in the evening, then checked first thing in the morning. Thin pieces of apple and pear only take about 5 hours, so start them early in the day.

- Thinner pieces dry more quickly
- Consistently sized pieces will have similar drying times
- Cut out brown spots or insect damaged parts of the fruit

tip

The quality of the produce determines the quality you end up with. Wormy sour apples will taste extra sour once dried!

Ascorbic Acid

For brighter colored food that is more true to the fresh product, dip it in lemon juice, pineapple juice or an ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) solution. Ascorbic acid is sold in bulk at health food stores. Mix one teaspoon ascorbic acid per quart of water. Honey Crisp and Pink Lady apples don't tend to oxidize much, so you can skip this step.

Using the Dehydrator

- Lay the food in a single layer, leaving room around pieces for air flow
- Check every few hours and rotate the trays, as most dehydrators dry unevenly
- Not all of the food will get done at the same time
- Check often in the last few hours, removing peices that are done earlier
- Once you load the dryer, finish that food completely before adding new food

Cooling & Storing Food

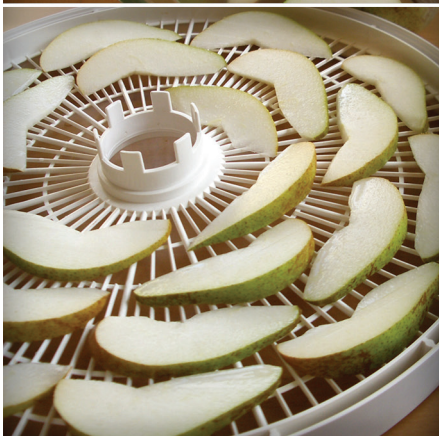
Cool the food completely before determining doneness. There should be no visible moist spots, but the fruit should be flexible. When in doubt, remember chips are tasty! You can put things back in the dehydrator if needed; however if food cools completely and is reheated, you run a higher risk of spoilage.

Store the finished product in plastic bags or wide mouth quart canning jars (our preference!) Store them away from light and in a cool spot. If you plan to keep the dried food for longer than 3-6 months, most books recommend either refrigerating or freezing it.

Dehydrators

You can use an oven if it can be set as low as 110-120°; otherwise invest in a dehydrator. Perhaps you can share one with a friend or neighbor. Check places like Craig's List and Freecycle to find affordable used food driers. Solar dehydrators can also be built on a budget; check your library and search online for directions.

One of your best references is the manual that comes with the dehydrator. It will give the truest time estimates. See our *Fruit Drying Recipes* fact sheet for more ideas.



photos Tabitha Borchardt



photo by Kelly G.

Fruit Leather

Wash, pit and slice 4 cups of fruit and put it in a blender. Add water if needed and blend until it is smooth. Add sweetener to taste, if needed. This should result in 2 cups of pureed fruit. Pour it onto solid plastic trays, or line a regular tray with parchment paper or plastic wrap. Don't use waxed paper!

Spread the mix evenly and no more than 1/4 inch thick. Dry until the leather begins to release from the edge of the tray and is no longer tacky (12-16 hours). If it sticks when removing it, let it dry longer. Cool completely before removing. Cut the leather into pieces and roll it on itself or around wax paper.

Along with your fruit tree harvest, try adding some of these to your fruit leather: Strawberries, bananas, rhubarb, berries, cinnamon, grated coconut, sesame or sunflower seeds.

tip

Fruit leather is a great way to use slightly overripe, irregularly shaped, or bruised fruit. Simply remove damaged areas and then puree.



photo by Claudia Lee

Fruit Chips

Fruit chips make a great mess-less snack for the car, hiking, school, work, parties or just about anywhere. Kids and adults will love them.

Wash and pit or core the fruit and leave the peels on it. Slice quite thinly, 1/4 inch thick or less. Lay the slices on dehydrator trays so that the pieces touch but don't overlap. Dry for 4 hours, then check. Rotate the trays and check every 1-1 1/2 hours, until done. Remove pieces as they finish; they should be crisp like a chip when completely cool. Store either in a paper bag inside a plastic bag or use a ziplock-type bag.

tip

Before drying, try sprinkling slices with a cinnamon-sugar mixture for added flavor.



photo by Dan Johnson

Plum Raisins

Use plums with easily removable pits. Halve them and remove the pit. "Pop" the backs. Lay the halved plums in the dehydrator skin side down. Dry many hours. Test for doneness by letting them cool completely (make sure there are no signs of dampness). The plum raisin should be chewy but not mealy or soft. Store in plastic bags or glass jars out of light and away from heat.

Squash Seeds

Mix a solution of one tablespoon salt per quart of water. Soak the seeds in the solution several hours or overnight. Slowly roast them in the oven at 300-325°. After 15 minutes stir them and check often. When they are crisp, remove them from the oven. Squash seeds are great served warm.

Other Ideas

Dried fruits are a quick way to add fruit to hot and cold cereals or to baked goods such as muffins, breads and pancakes.

Dry apples, bananas and strawberries can be powdered in the blender and added to smoothies and other treats.



photo by Jason Antony