



August 2008

# HCSF Newsletter

It's **August** and gardens, farm stands and farmer's markets are brimming with veggies! Did you buy or plant too much and now you're afraid it's going to go to waste? **We're here to help!** It's easy to freeze your summer produce. Read on for tips and tricks for freezing that will keep you in veggies all winter long!

## Freezing Vegetables

In order to freeze them, most fresh vegetables should be blanched. Blanching is boiling vegetables for a brief amount of time, which preserves the color, texture, and nutrition that would otherwise be lost when frozen.

### How to blanch vegetables:

- 1) Cut vegetables into uniform-sized pieces as directed in the chart below.
- 2) Bring pot of water to a boil.
- 3) Fill another pot or bowl with COLD water
- 4) Fully immerse vegetables into boiling water. Immediately cover and start the timer.
- 5) Boil for the time directed. Immediately drain vegetables and place them in cold water for the same amount of time as the vegetables were boiled.
- 6) Dry vegetables thoroughly. Pack them in freezer bags or rigid freezer containers, and date.

It is important that the boiling and cooling steps are carefully timed to ensure the highest quality of frozen vegetables. Vegetables should be used within 6 months.

Check out the table below for blanching times and other preparation tips for some common vegetables!



Vegetable	Blanching Time	Other notes
String Beans	3 min	Cut into 2-4 in pieces before blanching
Corn	4 min	Blanch on cob, then cut off kernels
Peas	2 – 3 min	Can blanch and freeze peas in the pods
Peppers*	3 min	Cut in half before blanching
Pumpkin/Winter Squash	Until soft	Bake, steam, or boil – then scrape pulp from the rind and mash – freeze in measured amounts
Zucchini/Summer Squash	3 min	Cut in ½ in slices or grate, freeze in measured amounts for baking

\*Peppers can be frozen without blanching

### To use frozen vegetables:

Bring ½ cup of lightly salted water to a boil for every 2 cups of frozen vegetables. Do not thaw the vegetables first. Add frozen vegetables and bring the water back to a boil. Cover and cook on low heat until fork tender.

Beans: boil for 5-8 min  
Corn: boil for 3-4 min



Peas: 5-10 min  
Zucchini/Summer Squash: boil 8-10 min

Frozen vegetables can also be cooked by microwaving, stir frying, baking, or adding to soups, stews and chili.

## Livin' It Up!

Just because summer is nearing its end, doesn't mean the fun has to end too! Stay active for the remainder of the summer with some of these fun activities the whole family will love!

**Making the Band:** Don't have GuitarHero? Make your own family band! Play instruments made from kitchen items using pots and pans as drums, rice in plastic bottles as maracas, etc.



**Don't Burst Your Bubble:** Make homemade bubbles: chase, jump, and pop them. Mix 1 cup of mild baby shampoo or dish soap with 3 cups of water. Make bubble wands out of straws or thin wire hangers (adult supervision please!).



**Cool Down:** Set up the sprinkler in the backyard for some cool and refreshing fun! Run through, leap across, and hop over the water.

## Healthy Recipes

### Microwave Stuffed Peppers

Makes 4 servings This recipe will reheat and freeze nicely.

#### Ingredients:

1 lb uncooked ground chuck (or use turkey for lower fat)  
½ cup instant rice (uncooked)  
1 15 oz can tomato sauce  
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce  
¼ tsp pepper, or to taste  
1/3 cup water



1 egg, beaten  
1 medium onion, chopped  
½ cup ketchup  
1 tsp salt  
3 large bell peppers cut in half, lengthwise  
½ tsp sugar

**Directions:** Mix together ground chuck (or turkey), rice, egg, onion, ½ cup tomato sauce, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper. Fill peppers with meat mixture and place in a microwave safe baking dish. Mix together remaining tomato sauce, water and sugar. Pour over green peppers. Cover with a tight fitting lid or plastic wrap. Microwave on medium high for 20 – 25 minutes until meat is no longer pink and peppers are tender.

### Tomato Zucchini Skillet

A great flavorful end-of-summer dish!  
Makes 8-10 Servings

#### Ingredients:

½ cup sliced green onion  
½ tsp garlic flakes or powder  
1 tsp vegetable oil  
1 tsp sugar  
¼ tsp dried parsley flakes  
1 tsp salt  
1/8 tsp pepper  
2 lbs zucchini, unpeeled, sliced ½-inch thick  
3 peeled tomatoes, cut into 8 wedges (or you can use canned whole tomatoes)



#### Directions:

Cook onion and garlic in oil until onion is tender. Add sugar, parsley, salt, pepper, and zucchini. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add tomatoes; heat through. Enjoy!

**Tip:** Garnish dish with a little sprinkle of shredded reduced fat mozzarella cheese. Or, add some cooked chicken or ground turkey to make this dish a complete meal.