



WALTER CHANDOLA

## Freezer Pleasers

Freezing is often the best way to preserve the flavors and textures of delicate vegetables, and small batches can be blanched to stabilize nutrients and texture, cooled to preserve color, then packaged in 30 minutes or less. Running a freezer consumes energy, but reduced packaging is where the home food preserver comes out on top. For instance, pint-size poly freezer bags or pouches require a quarter less energy to pro-

duce than the freezer-proof boxes used for many commercial frozen veggies.

To reduce energy consumption, keep your freezer in a cool basement or garage, and fill vacant spaces with plastic bottles or freezer bags filled with water. Should the power go off, the increased thermal mass from the extra ice will slow the thawing process. Store small items inside larger snap-top plastic boxes so they won't get lost in your freezer.

Crop	Peak Season	Handling and Storage Tips
Asparagus	Spring to early summer	Blanch in boiling water 1 minute, cool on ice and freeze.
Berries	Spring to fall	Rinse well, spin or pat dry and freeze without blanching. <i>(May also be dried.)</i>
Broccoli, cauliflower	Late spring, fall	Blanch in boiling water 1 minute, cool on ice and freeze.
Cantaloupe	Mid to late summer	Cut into bite-size pieces or make balls. Freeze and use within 2 months.
Chard	Summer to fall	Blanch to wilting point in the microwave, or in boiling water. Cool on ice, drain and freeze in small batches to add to other dishes.
Edamame	Mid to late summer	Simmer pods in salted water 5 minutes, and drain. When cool, remove beans and freeze. Can also be frozen whole.
Eggplant	Late summer to fall	Grill or broil slices seasoned with herbs and salt. Freeze when cool.
Peas	Early summer	Blanch in boiling water 30 seconds, cool on ice then freeze.
Peppers	Summer to fall	Grill or broil to remove skins before freezing, or leave skins on and blanch halved peppers in boiling water 1 minute, then freeze. <i>(May also be dried.)</i>
Snap beans	Summer	Blanch in boiling water 30 seconds, cool on ice and freeze. <i>(May also be dried or canned.)</i>
Spinach	Spring, fall	Blanch to wilting point in the microwave, or in boiling water. Cool on ice, drain and freeze. Stretch season by growing through winter with protection.
Summer squash	Summer	Grill or broil slices seasoned with herbs and salt. Freeze when cool. <i>(May also be dried.)</i>
Sweet corn	Mid to late summer	Cut kernels from cob to save freezer space. Heat just to boiling, cool and freeze.