

## Dehydrated Heroes

Some of the food crops listed here need brief precooking or other special preparation, but many can be washed, peeled, pared and popped into a dehydrator. You can also simply dry them in the sun or in a solar dehydrator. (See “Build a Solar Food Dehydrator” at [www.MotherEarthNews.com](http://www.MotherEarthNews.com).)

To even out the moisture levels between different-sized pieces, place dried foods in an airtight container in the refrigerator for a few days after drying them. If the pieces soften, dry them a bit more before packing away in storage. For maximum energy savings, store dried food in reusable airtight storage containers made of glass or plastic. The drying process often intensifies flavors, and dried foods take up little space. Dried foods keep three to six months in a dark room or pantry at cool temperatures, or up to a year in the freezer.



Crop	Peak Season	Handling and Storage Tips
Apples	Dry apples that ripen early, in August and September.	Dip quarter-inch thick slices or rings in ascorbic acid solution (vitamin C) to prevent browning. Dry until leathery and almost crisp. <i>(May also be frozen, canned or kept in cold storage.)</i>
Berries	Summer	Thoroughly rinse and pat dry. Cut large berries in half, then dry until leathery. <i>(May also be frozen or canned.)</i>
Cherries	Summer	Slice in half or remove pits with a cherry pitter. Dry until leathery, but still pliable. <i>(May also be frozen or canned.)</i>
Dry beans	Mid to late summer	Harvest after pods fade to tan. Remove beans from pods, then dry for 1 hour in a 150 degree oven to kill any potential pests.
Fruit leathers	Summer to fall	Purée clean, washed fruits. Pour into jellyroll pan lined with plastic wrap. Dry until leathery, but still slightly tacky.
Grapes	Late summer to fall	Use seedless varieties. Blanch in boiling water 30 seconds to crack the skins, then cool on ice. Dry until leathery, but still pliable. <i>(May also be frozen or canned.)</i>
Herbs	Summer	Hang bunches in a warm, well-ventilated room. Store dried leaves whole, and crush just before using. <i>(May also be frozen.)</i>
Mushrooms	Spring and fall	Wipe clean with a damp cloth or paper towel, then dry at room temperature until crisp.
Parching corn	Mid to late summer	Harvest mature ears when the husks dry to tan, then finish drying indoors until you can twist the kernels from ears. Break the ears in half before drying to promote air circulation around middle kernels.
Peppers	Late summer to fall	Clean thoroughly, cut into quarter-inch thick strips or rings, and dry until brittle. <i>(May also be frozen.)</i>
Peaches, Plums	Summer	Dip quarters or slices in ascorbic acid solution (vitamin C) to prevent browning. Dry until leathery, but still pliable. <i>(May also be frozen.)</i>
Snap beans	Summer	Blanch 1 minute, cool and pat dry. Dry until almost brittle. <i>(May also be frozen or canned.)</i>
Summer squash	Summer	Clean thoroughly, cut into quarter-inch slices, and dry until leathery and brittle. <i>(May also be frozen.)</i>
Tomato	Summer	Dip in boiling water to remove skins. Cut large tomatoes into rings, or cut smaller ones in halves or quarters. Dry until nearly crisp. <i>(May also be canned.)</i>
Vegetable paste	Summer to fall	Purée clean, washed vegetables. Cook over low heat 1 hour to evaporate water. Pour into jellyroll pan lined with plastic wrap. Dry to peanut butter consistency, store in the refrigerator. Use in place of vegetable bouillon.
Whole grains	Summer to fall	After threshing and screening, dry grains in 150 degree oven for 30 minutes to reduce moisture content. Store in airtight, animal-proof containers. <i>(May also be kept in cold storage.)</i>