

# Preserving Fall Vegetables for a Healthy Winter

*By Bill Bradley, Registered Dietitian and Cookbook Author*

My wife and I moved to the country so we could be more in touch with nature. Part of that is enjoying the food that is growing all around us. Fall is a particularly fertile time on our 1-acre plot. Pears, peaches, apples and tomatoes are coming in so fast that it is hard to keep up with processing them all. The local farmer's markets are packed with fall vegetables at incredible prices. I went to a local farm stand the other day and was very happy to buy huge red onions at 3 for a dollar and delicata squash for 2 for a dollar.

Fall in New England has traditionally been the time to be canning all of the fruits and vegetables for winter. Now that we have freezers, it can be a wonderful time to process fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs for the winter. Here are some of my favorite fall fruits and vegetables and how to preserve them so you can enjoy them all winter long.

## Apples

A few years ago, my Mother-in-Law called to tell us that most of her apple tree had fallen over from the weight of the apples. We had about a week to use up hundreds of apples. We made cider, applesauce, apple butter and ate apples until our tummies hurt.

**Applesauce** – Applesauce is a great way to preserve apples because it is relatively easy to make, it freezes really well and it tastes great! [Click here for a simple and tasty applesauce recipe.](#)

**Dehydrated Apple Rings in the Oven (or Dehydrator)** – Dried apple rings are a favorite for all ages. Kids and adults love them for a snack. As long as you dry them thoroughly, they last a very long time. You do have to be patient when making them as they will take a good part of a day in the oven to dehydrate. It is a great Sunday activity to make after apple picking on a Saturday. [Click here for a recipe for delicious dehydrated apple slices.](#)

**Apple Butter** – When I think of apple butter I think of my childhood in Vermont. We would get some apple butter from someone in the family and it would be gone within a week. I always thought that apple butter would be hard to make. If you make it the traditional way, it does take some time, but here is a simple recipe that can be made in the crockpot. Super easy and amazingly delicious! [Click here for apple butter recipe in the crockpot.](#)

## Squash

**Keeping Squash** – Winter squash such as Butternut, Acorn, Hubbard, Spaghetti and Delicata squash are all able to be stored for much of winter. It is best to get squash that has been “cured” meaning they have been kept in a warm, moist place at around 80 degrees for 7 to 10 days after being picked. You can ask if the squash you are buying has been cured. Then, for the rest of the time, you want it to be in a cool, dry and dark place. The best temperature is around 50-55 degrees. The cooler you keep it (down to 50 degrees), the longer the squash will last.

**Freezing Squash** – Squash is one of the easiest vegetables to freeze for later use. All you have to do is cut it and then freeze it. It's best to freeze it first on a tray and then put it in bags (this keeps the pieces from sticking together)– [Click here for a tutorial on how to freeze butternut squash.](#)

**Freezing Butternut Squash Bisque** – Butternut Squash Soup freezes very well. There isn't much that is as satisfying as having a warm soup in the winter and what a better way than to freeze a bunch of soup ahead of time. This way, when you come in from being in the cold, you can defrost some soup, heat it up and warm yourself up. [Click here for a Butternut Squash Bisque that is out of this world yum!](#)

## Potatoes

**Freezing Potatoes (Mashed)** – I know so many people that make a huge amount of mashed potatoes for Thanksgiving or some other gathering and then throw away the leftovers. Mashed potatoes freeze really well so why not save them for when you don't feel like cooking? [Click here for a tutorial on freezing mashed potatoes.](#)

**Keeping Potatoes** – Just like squash, potatoes that are going to last the longest have to be “cured” first meaning kept in a humid, warm place at 80 degrees F for about a week. You can ask your grocer or farmer if their potatoes have gone through this process. After curing, you want to keep them fairly cold and dry. The refrigerator is a good place to keep them cool if you have room. The cooler the better down to 35 degrees F.

**Frozen Hash Browns** – Mashed potatoes aren't the only way that you can successfully freeze a potato. Hash browns are another great recipe that can be frozen and thawed easily when you want a quick breakfast. Here is a recipe for frozen hash browns. Personally, I would use extra virgin olive oil with a little bit of butter instead of all butter. [Click here for how to make Frozen Hash Browns.](#)



## Fresh Herbs

**Drying Fresh Herbs** – Herbs and spices that you buy in the store are usually very expensive. If you grow herbs or buy them from a farmer's market when they are super cheap you can dry them and have herbs that are very flavorful and are much cheaper than store bought herbs. [Here is a tutorial video on how to dry your own herbs.](#)

**Freezing Fresh Herbs** – Most fresh herbs freeze really well and the process is simple. Remove the stems from the herbs, place the leaves on a cookie tray and freeze. Once frozen, place the frozen herbs in a Ziploc bag, label and put back in the freezer. [Here is an article on 3 ways to freeze fresh herbs.](#)

## Tomatoes

**Freezing Tomatoes** – Freezing tomatoes the traditional way can be time consuming, but if you want to go really easy then you can just cut them into quarters, place them on a sheet pan, freeze and then place in Ziploc bags and back into the freezer. [Here is a tutorial on how to do this.](#)

**Freezing Cherry Tomato Sauce** – Between the cherry tomatoes we get to pick at our farm share every week and the tons coming from our cherry tomato plant at our house, we have absolutely been inundated with these tasty little morsels. My new favorite recipe for cherry tomatoes is roasting them with olive oil, garlic, balsamic vinegar and capers. This recipe freezes very well and is a great way to enjoy the wonderful flavor of fall throughout the winter. The recipe for cherry tomato sauce with balsamic, garlic and capers is the featured recipe in this month's newsletter.

Preserving fruits, vegetables and herbs is not only a great way to have ripe, highly nutritious produce all winter long, it is also a way to save a lot of money as this food is very inexpensive this time of year. Preserving it now means you will be eating amazing produce during the winter when it is the most expensive at the store. I hope you give preserving a try and that you turn our abundant harvest now into a delicious winter meal later.

