



Storing Vegetables

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There is often an over-abundance of vegetables during the course of the home gardening season, especially in the fall when the gardening season is nearly over. Historically, food preservation and processing have assured an ample food supply and helped prevent starvation. Today, food storage and preservation are still popular practices because of high food prices, a plentiful food supply, and the desire for high quality, nutritious vegetables.

There are various methods for storing vegetables: drying, canning, freezing, and common storage. Which method you choose depends on the type of vegetable(s) involved, your family's likes and dislikes, and the facilities you have available.

Regardless of the type of storage method that you use, there are some general rules that apply to them all.

1. Use fresh vegetables picked at their prime.
2. For freezing, canning, or drying, preserve the vegetables immediately after picking before they lose their fresh quality and vitamins.
3. Store all canned, dried, or raw produce in a cool, dry location.
4. Vegetables that are stored raw must be absolutely free of cuts, rot, or decay.
5. In most cases, any stored produce should be used within one year.

Vegetables can be divided into four categories, according to their general storage requirements. These are cold-moist, cold-dry, cool-moist, and cool-dry. Vegetables in the cold-dry and cool-dry groups may be stored in a cool area of the basement.

Vegetables in the cold-moist and cool-moist groups can be stored in an underground root cellar (if you are fortunate to have one), or in a special storage room in the basement. The old-fashioned root cellar has practically disappeared from the American scene. Some older homes still have them, and they provide good conditions for vegetable storage. Modern basements are usually too warm for the long-term storage of such vegetables as onions, pumpkins, winter squash, dried produce, or even canned goods.

An alternative is to use a refrigerator. If you have two refrigerators, one can be used for vegetable storage and kept at a cold temperature (32° to 40°F). If there is only one refrigerator, the temperature range is usually between 38° to 42° F when the control is set for normal conditions.

Many older homes have pantries, back halls, enclosed porches, breezeways, other rooms, or even a shed that are often less well-insulated and provide the cool temperatures necessary for

vegetable storage. In this situation, the produce should be layered between some kind of packing material in boxes, baskets, or barrels.

Specific vegetable storage requirements for vegetables is provided below.

Vegetable	Relative Storage Temperature	Humidity (percent)	Storage Period
<i>Cold-Moist Group</i>			
Asparagus	32°F	95	2 weeks
Beet (topped)	32	95	1-3 months
Broccoli	32	95	3-5 weeks
Brussels sprouts	32	95	3-5 weeks
Cabbage (early)	32	95	3-6 weeks
Cabbage (late)	32	95	3-4 months
Carrot (topped)	32	95	4-6 months
Cauliflower	32	95	2-4 weeks
Collard	32	95	2-3 weeks
Corn, sweet	32	95	4-8 days
Horseradish	32	95	10-12 months
Kale	32	95	2-3 weeks
Leek	32	95	1-3 months
Lettuce	32	95	2 weeks
Onion (green)	32	95	2-3 weeks
Parsnip	32	95	2-6 months
Radish	32	95	2-3 weeks
Turnip greens	32	95	2-3 weeks
Turnip (roots)	32	95	4-5 months

Cool-Moist Group

Bean (snap and wax)	40-45	90-95	1 week
Bean (lima)	40-45	90-95	1 week
Cucumber	45-50	90-95	10-14 days
Eggplant	45-50	90	1 week
Pepper (sweet)	45-50	90-95	2-3 weeks
Potato (Irish)	40	85-90	4-6 months
Potato (sweet)	55-60	85-90	4-6 months
Squash (summer)	45-50	90	7-10 days
Tomato	60-65	85-90	1-4 weeks
Watermelon	40-50	80-85	2-3 weeks

Cold-Dry Group

Onion (dry)	32-35	60-70	2-8 months
Onion (sets)	32-35	60-70	6 months
Shallot	32-35	60-70	6-8 months

Cool-Dry Group

Pumpkin	50-55	60-70	2-3 months
Squash (winter)	50-55	60-70	3-6 months