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FRESH PRODUCE

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Running low on canned foods or overbuying fresh produce and can't afford for it to go bad? Here are some tips on how to freeze fresh produce and extend your food supply.



Use avocados before they go bad or freeze them. The water in avocados expands when they are frozen and can make them mushy when you defrost them, so if you plan to freeze avocados, mash them up before freezing.



Fresh fruit like berries, chopped pineapple or banana slices tend to stick together at times. To avoid this, first spread them out on a baking sheet to freeze. Once frozen, transfer them into a freezer bag. Fruits such as apples and pears freeze best when you turn them into a pie filling first.



If you freeze fresh vegetables or leafy greens, it is best to use them within 4-6 weeks, but if you blanch them first you can preserve some flavor, color, texture, and nutrients. To blanch vegetables, first steam the vegetables, drain the water, and then cool them immediately in an ice water bath. Prior to storing them in the freezer, make sure dab them with a paper towel to dry.



Most vegetables can just be rinsed, chopped and then frozen. Vegetables such as onions, bell peppers, squash, broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots all freeze well. Chances are if you have seen them in the frozen section at the grocery store they will do well.



You can even freeze fresh herbs – First wash and chop your herbs and then scoop them into ice cube trays. You can top the ice cube trays with water, chicken broth, or olive oil and then freeze them until solid. Once solid you can transfer them into a labeled freezer bag for longer storage. Then, whenever you want that fresh herb flavor just add a cube to your dish as it cooks.



Freeze an entire meal – If you have leftover soup, stews, or sauce let them cool and then transfer them into a freezer bag, label and date the item and enjoy another time.

Tips for Defrosting Food

Remember when properly defrosting your food; do not leave it on the counter at room temperature. It's best to thaw food in the refrigerator, especially if you may need to refreeze it again. Otherwise you can defrost it in a leak-proof package under cold running water; or emerge it under cold water with changing the water every 30 minutes until defrosted. Other options would be to defrost your items in the microwave, or just use your frozen fruits and vegetables for smoothies or when making nice cream (ice cream made with frozen bananas).

So while we all stock up on food at the grocery store, remember you can also buy and freeze fresh produce to extend your food supply. Stay healthy out there! You got this 😊