**How To Dry Fruits and Vegetables with a Dehydrator**

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Strawberries Dried in a Dehydrator. Photo © Erin Huffstetler

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Updated September 28, 2016

Fruits and vegetables are cheapest when they're in season. Learn how to dry produce with a food dehydrator, and you'll be able to stock up for year-round savings.

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Time Required:** 8-12 hours of drying time on average

**Here's How:**

1. Start with fresh fruits and vegetables of the very best quality. Overripe, bruised and otherwise deteriorated produce will not yield good results when dehydrated.
2. Clean, hull and slice all fruits and vegetables, taking care to maintain consistency in the thickness of the slices. (This will ensure that everything dries at an even rate.)
3. If desired, treat apples, pears and other fruits prone to oxidation with citrus juice or ascorbic acid. This will help to retain the color of the fruit before, during and after the drying process.
4. Blanche broccoli, cauliflower, celery, carrots, corn, peas and potatoes to speed drying time and to help maintain color. Three to five minutes in boiling water should be adequate.
5. Optional: Add salt, sugar or spices to flavor.
6. Now, load your fruit and vegetable slices onto the dehydrator trays, being careful not to overlap them, as this will slow the drying time.
7. Turn your dehydrator on immediately after loading to start the dehydration process. Consult the owner's manual for recommended drying times, but expect the process to take between 8-12 hours on average.

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Get it right

1. As you reach the end of the drying time, check your fruits and vegetables frequently for dryness. To do so, simply remove a slice from the dehydrator, allow it to cool and then feel it with your fingers. If the slice feels dry to the touch, it should be adequately dried. To further evaluate the dryness of fruit: cut several fruit slices in half, and check the cut edges for moisture beads. If any are present, the fruit is not yet dry enough, and needs to be returned to the dehydrator.
2. Allow your fruit and vegetable slices to cool for 30 to 60 minutes or until completely cool to the touch before packing.
3. Dried fruits need to go through an additional conditioning period before they are ready for storage. Place them in loosely packed jars, and shake once a day for 7-10 days to ensure the remaining moisture is evenly distributed between the dried pieces. If condensation appears on the jar, the fruit needs to be returned to the dehydrator for further drying.
4. Place all dried foods in air-tight containers or freezer bags; and store in a cool, dry and dark location until you are ready to use them.

**Tips:**

1. Process foods as soon after harvest as possible.
2. Do not add fresh produce to a partially dried load.
3. Drying times will vary based on the thickness of slices, the amount of water in the food, temperature, humidity and altitude. Start a journal to track and record your own drying times for various foods.
4. When [stored properly, dehydrated foods](https://www.thebalance.com/how-to-store-home-dried-foods-1388331) are usually good for a year.
5. Ascorbic acid can be purchased from grocery and drug stores, and is available in powder and tablet form.

**What You Need:**

* A dehydrator
* A knife
* A cutting board
* Air-tight containers or freezer bags
* Spices, sugar, or salt (optional)
* Ascorbic acid or citric acid (optional)
* A pot for blanching vegetables (optional)