



Step-by-Step Dehydration

■ Introduction

Drying food at home is simple to do. Dried foods are easy to use and convenient to store. However, unlike the exact methods needed for canning and freezing, finding the best technique for drying may require the trial-and-error approach. Various factors, such as the drying method used, the quality of the produce, pretreatment techniques and even the climate, may affect the finished product. Follow the general guidelines given for each specific food and then make the necessary adjustments.

Successful home food dehydration is dependent on three basic principles:

- Heat: controlled temperature high enough to force out moisture but not hot enough to cook the food.
- Dry Air: to absorb the released moisture.
- Air Circulation: to carry the moisture away.

When food is dehydrated, 80 to 95% of the moisture is removed, inactivating the growth of bacteria and other spoilage organisms. This makes it a useful method of preservation.

■ You Will Need

- Dehydration recipe such as one found in the Ball Blue Book® Guide to Preserving or www.freshpreserving.com
- Electric dehydrator, common kitchen utensils and meal preparation equipment
- Food storage containers that protect from air, moisture, light and insects, such as home canning jars, plastic jars, plastic storage containers with locking lids and vacuum packaging
- Fresh produce and other quality ingredients



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■ Step 1

READ through recipe and instructions. Assemble equipment and ingredients. Follow guidelines for recipe preparation and dehydration method.

■ Step 2

SELECT appropriate storage containers for the type of food being dehydrated. It should protect from air, moisture and light. Wash containers in hot soapy water. Rinse well, dry and cool completely.

■ Step 3

PREPARE fresh produce and other quality ingredients according to the dehydration recipe instructions. Most vegetables and some fruits benefit from pretreatment techniques such as blanching and dipping. Follow recipe recommendation.

■ Step 4

DRY in electric dehydrator according to recipe.

■ Step 5

PACK loosely in storage containers and seal.

■ Step 6

LABEL containers or packaging with the date and name of the product.

■ Step 7

STORE in a cool, dry, dark place with temperatures between 50° and 70°F for the recommended length of time. Check dried fruits and vegetables occasionally for moisture. If moisture is apparent, dispose of food.