



**Ontario Home Economics Association**

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*Ask A Professional Home Economist*

**For Immediate Release:**

## **Putting Food Down - the Easy Way!**

*(Freezer Tips and Tricks from Jan Main, P.H.Ec.)*

**Professional Home Economist and Owner of Jan Main's Kitchen Cooking School in Scarborough, Ontario, Jan Main offers timely freezer tips from her book *"The Best Freezer Cookbook"* to help you keep a summer culinary memory long into winter.**

Did you know freezing is the simplest, quickest form of food preservation? At this time of year when markets and gardens are overflowing with quality fruits and vegetables, it is the time to "put food down" the easy, freezer way. Freezing, unlike canning, does not require any special equipment. Containers for storing the food can be as simple as freezer bags, readily available at supermarkets, or clean plastic containers (oh, another use for the yoghurt container). These are perfect for storing preserves, fruits, stews and vegetables. Above all, freezing is safe and convenient, allowing you to keep your favourite foods for months until you are ready to enjoy them.

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To freeze foods and maintain maximum quality, it is essential to understand a little about bacteria and enzyme action. All food, raw or cooked, contains bacteria and other microorganisms that grow quickly at room temperature to cause food spoilage. Freezing, while not killing the bacteria, drastically slows their growth and, in this way, allows keeping fruits and vegetables safely for months.

Enzymes in fruits and vegetables are natural chemical agents, which cause changes in colour, texture, odour and flavour. These enzymes must be stopped if the food is to stay at its peak quality; that is why we blanch vegetables and some fruits and why we must treat fruit with ascorbic acid. You will have to consult a freezer chart for specific blanching times and amounts of ascorbic acid.

The simplest foods to freeze are berries (strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, blackberries, currants, blueberries) and rhubarb. Simply pick over the fruit, wash and pat dry gently with a tea towel, and freeze in a single layer on a baking sheet. In the case of rhubarb, cut into 1 inch (2.5cm) pieces and freeze on a baking sheet. Once frozen, pack into freezer bags in usable amounts (2 or 4 cups/500mL or 1L), expelling as much oxygen as possible. Label and date each package. The fruit will maintain quality for up to one year.

Likewise, herbs freeze beautifully. For that “just picked flavour,” wash, dry, and chop herbs. Package in freezer bags in usable portions (2 - 4 tablespoons/25-50mL) and freeze for up to one year. Each time you use one of the herb sachets, it will bring back flavourful memories of your summer garden.

Chutney, jam and relishes work extremely well by freezing in a plastic container. Remember to leave ½ inch/1.2cm head space

In the heat of summer or the rush of fall, you may not feel like preserving and hate the thought of using a boiling water bath. Freezing is the answer! Why not freeze fruits and vegetables at their peak to use in your favourite recipe later? It works like a charm.

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**Freezer Antipasto**  
(from “*The Best Freezer Cookbook*” by Jan Main, P.H.Ec.)

*If you have a jar of this in your freezer, you are never at a loss for a quick appetizer. It makes a great pasta toss, too! Keep an extra jar for a hostess gift and accompany with a box of your favourite crackers.*

4 carrots, diced  
2 sweet red peppers, diced  
2 zucchini, diced  
1 cauliflower, finely chopped  
1 large onion, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 cups ketchup (500mL)  
2/3 c. horseradish (175mL)  
½ c. each: vegetable oil AND cider vinegar (125mL)  
1 jar (375mL) pimento-stuffed olives, drained and coarsely chopped  
1 jar (6oz /170 mL) marinated artichokes and juice, coarsely chopped  
1 bay leaf  
½ c. chopped fresh parsley (125mL)  
2 tsp. dried basil OR 2 tbsp (25mL) fresh frozen basil (10mL)  
1/4 tsp. hot pepper sauce (1mL) (or more to taste)  
2 cans (170g) water-packed flaked tuna (can be added at time of serving)

1. In a steamer basket set over a large pot of boiling water, individually steam cauliflower, zucchini, carrots and peppers until tender-crisp.
2. In a large stainless steel saucepan, combine onions, garlic, ketchup, oil, vinegar, horseradish, olives, artichokes, parsley, basil and hot pepper sauce. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Stir in steamed vegetables; simmer for another 15 minutes.
4. Remove from heat. Cool fully. Discard bay leaf. Pack into preserving jars or containers of usable size leaving ½ inch head space. Seal, label and date. Freeze for up to 6 months.
5. Thaw in refrigerator overnight. Stir in drained tuna. Serve with crackers. Makes about 10 cups or 2.5 L.

**Variation:** Use canned shrimp instead of tuna

*The Ontario Home Economics Association, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.*

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