



“Teaching research-based practices of safe home food preservation to the residents of Solano and Yolo Counties.”

HOW TO SUN DRY FRUIT

Drying fruit in an electric dehydrator generally yields the highest success rate. If you don't have an electric dehydrator, you can also dry them in the oven. Fruit can also be dried in the sun with a little preplanning.



Sun drying of fruit requires several days with temperatures over 86 degrees, plus humidity under 60 percent. If the temperature is too low, and/or the humidity is too high, the fruit will spoil before they are dried. It's also important to bring the fruit indoors at night if the temperature drops more than 20 degrees and bring them back out into the sun the next day. So before preparing the fruit to be dried, check the weather forecast to insure the proper drying temperatures and humidity levels for the upcoming week.

Prepare the fruit by washing them in water to remove any dirt or other residue. The fruit can be dried whole or sliced. Sliced fruit dries faster than whole fruit.

Pretreatment of the Fruit. Light colored fruit such as apples darken when exposed to air, and even continue to darken after they've been dried if they haven't been pretreated. There are a variety of methods of pretreatment. Two frequent ones used by individuals are pretreatment with ascorbic acid (vitamin C) or a fruit juice dip.

Ascorbic acid is available from drug stores. To pretreat with ascorbic acid, mix a teaspoon of powdered ascorbic acid into two cups of water. Dip the fruit in the solution for 3 – 5 minutes, remove it, then drain it and place it on your drying tray.

Fruit juice that is high in vitamin C, such as orange, lemon and pineapple juice can also be used as a pretreatment solution. But if a fruit juice is used, it will add its flavor to the fruit being treated.

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Use only food safe dehydrator trays and cover them with cheesecloth to keep out insects.
You can use electric dehydrator trays. You can also use screens made of stainless steel, Teflon® coated fiberglass and plastic. Cover your tray with cheesecloth to keep out insects, but make sure the cheesecloth is raised above the tray so that it does not touch the fruit.

Turn the fruit once a day. And if the night time temperature is 20 degrees lower than the day temperature, bring the trays indoor during the evening.

The fruit should be dried so that only about 20% moisture remains. There are some simple ways to test if it's dried. You can fold a piece in half. It should not stick together. You can also cut a few pieces of cooled fruit in half. You should not be able to squeeze any moisture out of it or see any moisture.

Pasteurize your sun-dried fruit to kill any insects or insect eggs that may be on the fruit. You can pasteurize your dried fruit by sealing it in a freezer bag and place it in your freezer (set at 0 degrees F or below) for at least 48 hours. Or you can pasteurize your sun-dried fruit by arranging it single layer on a shallow pan and placing it in your oven for 30 minutes at 160 degrees F.

Store dried fruit in moisture and vapor proof containers. Glass jars and freezer containers are good storage containers for your dried fruit since they are also rodent proof.

To learn more about drying fruit and other home preserved foods, contact the UCCE Master Food Preserver Program of Solano County, *Advice to Preserve by... Ask Us!*

This information was adapted from "Drying Foods at Home" Leaflet 2785, Division of Agricultural Sciences, University of California, reprinted June 1981, and "Preserving Foods: Drying Fruits and Vegetables" University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

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