

Recipes and Tips on Dehydrating Foods by Lesa DeHaven on the 'Time Budget' radio show. <http://www.decadeoflight.org>

How to Dehydrate Eggs

There are a few reasons to dehydrate eggs, and one of them is emergency preparedness. Dehydrated food, including eggs, will store for a long time without refrigeration. Eggs are a popular choice because of their high protein and fat content.

- * Whisk or blend the whole eggs in a bowl so they are smooth, as if you're getting ready to scramble them
- * Pour onto a "fruit leather" tray in your dehydrator or on a parchment lined cookie sheet for the oven
- * Dry at 145 degrees F until they're dry and brittle
- * You can grind them in a blender to make powdered eggs
- * Store them in glass jars or plastic containers

What about salmonella?

You can also cook your eggs before dehydrating. You might be worried about salmonella not being killed at under 160 degrees, so frying them up in a nonstick pan is okay. Do not use oil or butter, the oil will go rancid while drying and in storage.

Make sure to note how many eggs you've used up, so you can record that on your storage containers. That way you'll be able to make the correct substitution when cooking with eggs.

When you're ready to rehydrate for cooking, add water at about a 1:1 ratio. Then use them like you would fresh eggs.

When you preserve your eggs this way, you increase the shelf life to several months. It's a good way to save them if you have chickens or bought a bunch on sale.

Drying Beef Jerky in an Oven

Making beef jerky at home is very easy to do, and you don't even have to have a food dehydrator to do it. All you need are some basic pans, an oven, and a good recipe. People have been making jerky for thousands of years as a way to preserve meat before there was refrigeration.

What Meat to Use for Jerky

It can usually be made from any lean meat, such as beef, venison, or turkey breast. You can even make jerky from fish, like salmon and halibut. Raw poultry is not recommended because of the low quality of the finished product. I do not recommend pork.

Use frozen meat and don't thaw the meat completely if you slice at home, it is easier to cut the right thickness when it's firm. Slice the meat no thicker than a half an inch, and be sure to cut away all the fat, as it will become rancid. My grocery store meat counter will slice for me for free when I buy the meat. I prefer it sliced to 1/4 inch if possible.

How to Cut Meat for Jerky

You can cut the meat in one of two ways, or if you have enough meat to make a lot, you can try both styles and see which one you like best.

If you want stringy chewy jerky cut with the grain of the meat. That means that if you look at a piece of meat, you can see how the muscle tissue lays out, kind of like lines you see you see on a cut piece of wood. If you cut the meat with the grain, it will split down the length of the piece.

If you want jerky that breaks apart easily, it would be a good idea to cut across the grain instead. It just depends on how you like to eat your jerky. I prefer it this way.

If you want a good recipe for making a basic starter oven jerky, here is a recipe. This recipe calls for beef or buffalo. This is a good recipe making jerky without a dehydrator.

Basic Oven Cooked Beef Jerky

1. You will need one pound of top round steak, a half a cup each of liquid smoke and soy sauce.
2. You will need 1 teaspoon each of black pepper, red pepper flakes, and salt.
3. You will need a cooking rack, and an shallow baking pan.
4. Trim all the fat from the meat, place in the freezer until firm.
5. Slice into thin strips in the desired grain direction, place into a large but shallow bowl.
6. Mix all the other ingredients well, pour over meat and place a weighted cover on like another plate and refrigerate 4-14 hours, drain and pat dry.
7. Preheat the oven at 250 degrees, place meat on the rack in a single layer with none of the sides touching.

8. Bake for 3-4 hours, or until dry to the touch, then remove from the oven and allow to air dry for 24 hours then store in a sealed air tight container.

Dehydrating Tips:

FRUITS

Dried fruit is superb! Try it plain, as fruit leather, or in ice cream, cobblers and pies. It's hard to imagine a better tasting, more nutritious snack than dried fruit. Dried fruit is naturally sweet, has no preservatives, and is inexpensive.

Pre-treatment

Most fruits just need halving, coring or pitting, and slicing. Some fruits, such as apples, pears, peaches apricots and bananas tend to darken somewhat with drying, or storage beyond six to seven months.

To prevent this, fruit pieces may be dipped in solutions of lemon juice, pineapple juice, orange juice, sodium bisulfite, or ascorbic acid prior to dehydration. Dip the fruit in the solution for two minutes. Drain on paper towels and place in drying trays.

VEGETABLES

Dried vegetables are every bit as versatile as fruits. With them, you can make delicious soups, stews, souffles, casseroles, and much more. Wash vegetables in cold water before processing. A certain amount of coring, slicing, peeling or shredding is required. Pretreatment procedures for vegetables vary from none at all to steam or water blanching.

Heat Treatment

Most vegetables will need to be steamed or blanched before drying. This inactivates the enzyme which caused ripening and would continue to bring about changes in flavor and odor. Although untreated vegetables used within three to four months will have acceptable flavor, heat treated vegetables reconstitute much more quickly, making it desirable to treat even those to be used on next week's camping trip.

Steaming is the better method of treating. Place a single layer of chopped or sliced vegetables in a colander or steam basket. Shredded vegetables can be 1/2 inch deep in the colander or basket. Set vegetables in a pot above a small amount of boiling water and cover. Water should not touch the vegetables. Begin timing immediately. Refer to table for length of steaming. When ready to remove, vegetables should be barely tender. Spread steamed vegetables on trays and dehydrate.

Blanching is faster than steaming, but many nutrients are lost in the blanching water. It is not recommended for chopped or shredded vegetables, which would easily overcook during blanching. To blanch sliced vegetables, drop the prepared vegetable into a large pot of boiling water. Do not add more than 1 cup food per quart of boiling water. Begin timing immediately. For timing, follow standard freezing directions. Timing is approximately one-third to one-half that of steaming, or until vegetables are barely tender.

A few vegetables, such as onions, garlic, peppers, tomatoes and mushrooms can be dried and reconstituted successfully without heat treatment. In general, if vegetables must be steamed or blanched for freezing, they must be treated for drying.

MEATS

Meats, poultry, and fish dry beautifully. The resulting products are lightweight and high in protein, making them an ideal food for outdoor enthusiasts. The dehydrator turns thin slices of beef, poultry, fish, or game meats into hearty mid-afternoon snacks or food to use much like salami on pizza or hash for main dishes. By taking advantage of fresh meat specials, these dried products can be obtained for a fraction of the cost of commercially prepared dried meats.

Preparation

Cut meats across the grain into thin strips about 1-inch wide and 1/4-inch thick. Trim off all fat and connective tissues. For easier cutting, partially freeze by placing meats on the bottom of the freezer for about 30 minutes. Turn and freeze 15 minutes longer. To prepare fish, filet, then cut into 1-inch strips.

Dehydrated Hash Browns With Eggs and Sausage

Ingredients:

Makes 4 Servings

- * 4 1/2 lbs baking potatoes
- * 2 large onions
- * 2 tablespoons olive oil
- * 10 ounces sausage (beef, pork, turkey, or soy, minced)
- * 1 teaspoon salt

- * 1 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- * 8 eggs (beaten)
- * 1/2 cup parmesan cheese (finely chopped)

Directions:

Prep Time: 10 mins

Total Time: 50 mins

1. Grate, then drain in a colander, pressing out moisture: 4 1/2 pounds baking potatoes, 2 large onions.
2. Heat a Dutch oven over medium heat, then add: 2 tablespoons olive oil.
3. When the oil is hot, add the potatoes and onion pressing them into the pan and stirring, occasionally for 10 minutes.
4. Stir in: 10 ounces sausage, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper.
5. Reduce heat to very low, cover, and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Oil a 10-by-13-inch casserole dish.
7. Stir into the potato mixture: 8 eggs (beaten), 1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese.
8. Spread the mixture in the casserole dish. Bake for 20 minutes, or until golden brown.
9. Spread on covered dehydrator trays and dehydrate for 4 1/2 hours at 145 degrees (time will vary depending on dehydrator). or spread on parchment covered cookie sheets for oven at same temperature.
10. To rehydrate, cover with water 1/2 inch above the level of food in pot, boil, stir, and serve.