



# Let's Preserve Newsletter

Lancaster County

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*Dear Food Preserver:*

*As summer draws to a close, an abundance of produce sits in our gardens, at roadside stands, and in our farmers markets inviting us to find creative ways of using it. If your garden is like mine there is always more produce than can be used immediately.*

*Your phone calls indicate you want to enjoy these good foods all year. Whether you choose to can, freeze, or dry produce, you are concerned about its safety and quality.*

*This issue of the Let's Preserve Newsletter includes some canning and freezing procedures plus a few favorite recipes.*

*May you enjoy the bounty of the harvest.*

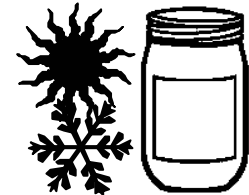
*Sincerely,*

*Nancy R. Wiker  
 Extension Agent - Family and Consumer Sciences*

*In consultation with:  
 Martha Zepp*

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## Feature Food of the Month

### Zucchini

That prolific vegetable that people joke about not being able to give away can be used in some very tasty recipes. One of Martha's favorites is Zucchini Bread. This recipe contains less oil than most zucchini breads but is still moist. She always doubles the recipe and freezes the extra loaf to enjoy in the fall or winter.

#### Zucchini Nut Loaf

- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup finely shredded unpeeled zucchini
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup cooking oil
- 1/4 teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel or 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts



In mixing bowl, stir together flour, cinnamon, baking soda, nutmeg, baking powder, and salt; set aside. In another mixing bowl beat together sugar, shredded zucchini, and egg. Add oil and lemon peel; mix well. Stir flour mixture into zucchini mixture. Gently fold in chopped nuts. Turn batter into a greased and floured 8x4x2-inch loaf pan. Bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees for 55 to 60 minutes or till wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Remove from pan; cool thoroughly on rack. Wrap and store loaf overnight before slicing. Makes 1 loaf.

*Adapted from Better Homes and Gardens New Cookbook.*

When zucchini is frozen, it tends to become watery. It may be grated and frozen for use in making zucchini bread. It is generally not acceptable to freeze slices to use later as a cooked vegetable.

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## Techniques

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### Why Blanch Vegetables—Enzymes

Recently I received a call asking if it was really necessary to blanch vegetables since it takes so long and “her neighbor just put the beans in the freezer without blanching.” Yes, most vegetables do need to be blanched to stop enzyme reactions. Enzymes are chemicals that continue the ripening process in food. If they are not destroyed, enzymes reaction will go on even during frozen storage--the longer the time in storage and the higher the freezer temperature, the more noticeable will be the results of this enzyme activity. Enzyme activity does not produce harmful food poisoning type spoilage, but rather a deterioration of quality. Blanching improves the quality, preserves vitamins, and retains color, texture and flavor.

Exceptions to blanching vegetables are chopped onions, green peppers, celery, and herbs. Tomatoes can be frozen for later cooking if you are in a hurry, but they will have better flavor if you simmer them before freezing. Blanching is a

must for corn, beans, peas, spinach, etc. Refer to a reliable freezing bulletin for blanching times. (Request the Let’s Preserve --Blanching Vegetables handout from your local extension office.) Remember to start counting blanching time after the water comes to a boil with the food added.

### High and Low Acid Foods

The natural acidity of a food determines the method and time needed to process food safely. Foods with a pH above 4.6 are low acid and foods below 4.6 are called high acid foods. The higher acidity helps to deter bacterial growth that could cause illness. Generally fruits and tomatoes are classified as high acid foods and can be processed by the boiling water bath method using USDA canning guidelines. Vegetables, soups, stews, and meat sauces are classified as low acid foods and must be processed in a pressure canner at appropriate pressure.

Because the acidity of tomatoes is borderline, USDA recommends that 2 tablespoons of bottled lemon juice be added to each quart of tomatoes before processing in the boiling water bath. (One tablespoon of lemon juice should be added to each pint of tomatoes.) Caution: If other vegetables are added to tomatoes, the acidity level may be lowered requiring pressure canner processing. For this reason it is good to follow a recently approved USDA tested recipe for processing directions.

Pickled and processed foods have high acidity levels from the vinegar and may be processed as other high acid foods in the boiling water bath.

### Head Space

Head Space is the space in the jar between the inside of the lid and the top of the food or its liquid. Usually one inch of head space is allowed for vegetables, meats, and other low acid food; 1/2 inch headspace is used for fruits and tomatoes, and 1/4 inch headspace is needed for juices, jams, jellies, pickles, and relishes that are packed in jars hot. Remove air bubbles with a nonmetallic spatula after packing the food into the jar to accurately determine head space.

Some foods swell more than others and need more headspace--especially starchy foods. Without adequate space, the food may boil under the lid losing contents and preventing the lid from sealing. Too much headspace may result in adequate air not being driven from the jar and not sealing properly. Food may also discolor from too much headspace.

### Techniques for Individually Quick Freezing (IQF) of Mixed Vegetables

Do you like to open a package of beans or cauliflower and take out only as much as you need for one meal? Do you like to mix a couple of vegetables to create a new flavor combination like the gourmet vegetable blends that are sold in the supermarket? With individually quick freezing (IQF), sometimes called tray freezing, you can create your favorite combinations and can control the amount used more easily because it is not all in a clump. You can make mixtures of vegetables that are harvested at different times.

Prepare the vegetables for freezing as usual. Cut larger vegetables into 1 to 1-1/2 inch pieces. After blanching and chilling, you need to drain the foods thoroughly. Put the foods in a single layer on a flat, large tray. Freeze only till firm--don't leave food uncovered or unpackaged for days! It will dehydrate. This method works well if your garden produces small amounts at a time and if you freeze using this method, you can harvest at the peak of freshness and freeze immediately.

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## Questions???

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Although you can call or write anytime with your questions, Martha Zepp will be available on Wednesdays through September 12, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to answer food preservation questions. Call Penn State Cooperative Extension at 717-394-6851. You may also stop in the office to have your dial gauge checked for accuracy during that time.

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## Cucumber Recipe

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Here's a family favorite for using fresh cucumbers that Martha received from the extension service years ago. She has frozen these and enjoys them in winter. The texture differs from a fresh cucumber but she finds them an acceptable product.



### *Gingered Cucumbers*

Wash and peel 2 cucumbers (leaving some green on). Slice thinly. Add 2 teaspoons salt and cover with ice water. Let stand 10 minutes. Drain well. Mix and bring to a boil 1/2 cup vinegar, 5 tablespoons sugar, 2 teaspoons sesame seed (optional), and 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger. Pour hot syrup over drained cucumbers. Chill to serve. (These can be frozen.)

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## Pickle Tips

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Wash cucumbers and cut 1/16 inch off the blossom end. This removes soil that may cause spoilage.

Process pickles in the boiling water bath—no more open kettle canning.

Use canning salt. (See Salt article.)

Use vinegar with 5% acidity.

Use naturally soft water—drain off tap water that has set overnight.

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## Salt Facts

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The purpose of salt in freezing and canning is to provide flavor. It is not a factor in the preserving of quality. Therefore, you can omit salt (except in some pickle recipes) if you are on a salt free diet.

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## Resources

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Iodized salt should not be used for pickles and canning because it may cause pickles to darken, discolor, or be spotty. It will also cause unusual colors to form in some vegetables. For example--cauliflower will sometimes turn pink or purple.

Table salt has additives to prevent caking. This may leave a sediment in the bottom of the jars.

Canning salt is pure salt--no additives. It is best for canning, pickling, and sauerkraut.

Kosher salt is a coarse, flaked, pure salt that can be used in canning, but it is lighter in bulk than regular salt and so you should use twice as much. If a recipe calls for one cup of regular use two cups of Kosher flaked salt.

Rock Salt is used for ice control, making homemade ice cream, and in chemical processing. Since it is not a refined food-grade salt, it is not suitable for human consumption in cooking.

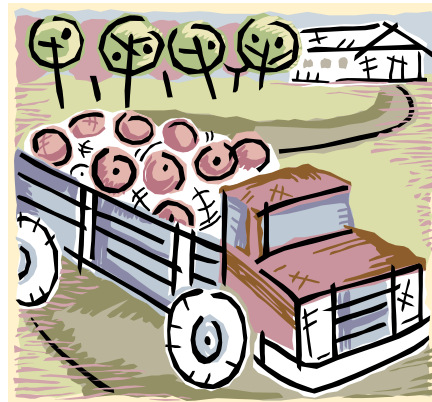
Salt substitutes, if desired, can be added when serving the food

These are some publications that provide good canning help that are available from the Lancaster County Extension Office.

Ball Blue Book Guide to Home Canning, Freezing and Dehydration published by the Altrista Corporation, Muncie, Indiana. Cost \$3.75.

Salsa Recipes for Canning by Val Hillers and Richard Dougherty, A Pacific Northwest Extension Publication. Free.

Let's Preserve --a series of handouts on fruits and vegetables prepared by Penn State. Free.



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This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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