

Freezer Pesto

Stash some of this emerald sauce in ice cube trays and freeze. Then add to dishes when your garden full of basil is just a memory. Most people enjoy Parmesan cheese with their pesto. This recipe omits the Parmesan, which can be fresh when you serve it, for optimal flavor.

3 cups fresh basil leaves, packed firmly
2 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed
½ cup pine nuts (cashews or walnuts make fine substitutes)
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
Sea salt to taste

In a food processor, pulse the basil, garlic, and pine nuts until finely chopped. Add the olive oil and process until the sauce is nearly smooth. Taste and adjust salt to suit your tastes, remembering that adding Parmesan later will add saltiness.

Distribute rounded tablespoons of pesto into the wells of an ice cube tray. Freeze until firm, then transfer pesto cubes to an air-tight freezer storage container, such as a plastic freezer bag



or glass Mason jar and store in the freezer until ready to use.

Drop cubes into a simmering tomato soup for a burst of flavor or defrost one cube to spread on grilled cheese sandwiches.

Oven-Dried Tomatoes

The rich, sweet, tomato flavor concentrates in these little jewels. Store them away for winter if you can wait that long! *Note: because this recipe involves leaving an oven door ajar, this is not for homes with small children.*

Olive oil or parchment paper
Fresh tomatoes (Roma or paste tomatoes are best)
Sea salt

Set your oven dial to its lowest setting (140–150° is ideal). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or lightly brush with olive oil. Prepare tomatoes by slicing in half lengthwise and scooping out seeds. Place cut-side up on the baking sheet and lightly sprinkle with sea salt. Place sheet in oven and leave oven door slightly ajar to encourage air flow. Dehydrate in the oven for 6–10 hours or until leathery, but not brittle. Cool completely, then store in a transparent air-tight container.

Shake container daily for 7 to 10 days to evenly distribute any residual moisture. If condensation develops on the container, open and return tomatoes to the oven for more drying. Enjoy the tomatoes dried, or rehydrate in hot water for plump, juicy tomatoes in your winter sauces and soups.



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StrongerTogether.coop is a place for people to gather on their food journeys. It’s a place to find out more about what’s in your food, where it comes from, where to find great food, how to prepare it, and a whole lot more. It’s also a place to talk with others about food topics you’re exploring, are passionate about, and even want to get involved in.

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Food Preservation



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From keeping lettuce crisp to enjoying

homemade tomato sauce year-round, food preservation methods are the key to making good things last.

Preserving food can be as simple as squeezing a little lemon juice on an avocado slice to prevent browning or as complicated as pressure canning your own venison stew. It's only natural to want to enjoy your favorite foods throughout the year, and to keep them tasting as close to fresh-picked as you can.

Food preservation can be much more than just practical methods to keep an abundance of fresh food from going bad. A bumper crop of raspberries or a CSA box full of cabbage can lead to new recipes and fun, creative ways to enjoy your favorite foods. If you think fresh basil is delicious during the summer, imagine how delicious that bright spark of flavor would be on some creamy pasta in the middle of winter! Preserving food also translates into saving money and keeps food out of the compost bin.

Canning

Home cooks have been preserving food in jars for centuries, and these days we have plenty of resources to do so safely and with confidence. Canning does require some special equipment, available at many co-ops and hardware stores, and recipes designed and tested for safety. After the initial investment in jars, a canner, and a few

accessories, the expenses are minimal and the results can be phenomenal. Canned goods go far beyond the usual tomatoes and green beans. Modern canning recipes allow you to create unique and memorable foods for gifting or for enjoying yourself.

Did you know? Home-canned goods should be used within a year for optimal quality, but are safe for much longer, as long as safe canning methods were used.

Freezing

When it comes to nutritious preserved foods, freezing is second only to fresh foods. While freezing can affect the texture of some foods, most vegetables, fruits, meats, soups, and even herbs can easily be frozen in airtight containers for use all year long. The key is to start with cold foods so that the time it takes for them to freeze is very short. This minimizes ice crystals and preserves the color, texture, and taste of your foods. Try freezing cold berries or chopped vegetables in a single layer on a baking sheet. Once frozen, transfer to a freezer bag or Mason jar for storage. You'll be able to pluck a single berry or measure 2 cups worth from the container without defrosting the entire batch. And remember: a full freezer is an efficient freezer, so don't be shy about filling it up!



Did you know? Nuts, seeds, and whole grains can be stored in the freezer to extend their shelf life and prevent spoilage.

Drying

Dehydrating foods is a simple and easy way to keep vegetables, fruits, and even meats stored away until you are ready to use them. Drying preserves foods by taking all the moisture away; without moisture, bacteria cannot grow and your foods stay delicious for months—even years. While there are plenty of dehydrators available, many recipes are possible using a regular home oven. Fresh herbs can be dried in a microwave or just hanging from your ceiling! The best thing about drying is that it uses very little energy, and the preserved foods are lightweight—easy to store and transport (perfect for camping!).

Did you know? Dipping fruit slices in pineapple or citrus juice before drying can preserve their color and prevent browning. It's delicious, too!

Fermenting

Fermentation brings us some of our favorite foods: cheese, yogurt, beer, wine, pickles, and even chocolate. Nearly every culture in the world makes use of the natural preservative effects of fermentation. Fermentation works by transforming the natural sugars in foods into tart and flavorful foods that tend to resist spoilage at cool temperatures. Fermentation is made possible by the action of beneficial bacteria—the same bacteria that keep our immune and digestive systems healthy. So fermented foods are not only practical, they also deliver a healthy dose of probiotics. Another benefit of fermentation is that no special equipment is required. You can get started with as little as a knife, a cabbage, and some sea salt, and couple of weeks later you'll be enjoying sauerkraut!

Did you know? Every ferment is unique because of the bacteria and yeasts that are naturally present in the air and foods in that region. The same recipe can taste different across the globe!

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Carol W. Costenbader, Storey Publishing, 2002

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Resources

National Center for Home Food Preservation
www.uga.edu/nchfp

Canning Across America
<http://www.canningacrossamerica.com/>

Cooperative Extension Services—Find your state's resources
<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/>

