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How to Freeze Asparagus

If you like frozen asparagus in the winter, just imagine how good it would taste if you had picked a head yourself and then quickly froze it at home! It is also one of the simplest ways to put up a vegetable for the winter. Here's how to do it, complete instructions in easy steps and completely illustrated. The asparagus will taste MUCH better than anything you've ever had from a store.

Directions for Freezing Asparagus

Ingredients

- fresh asparagus - any quantity. I figure one handful per serving.

Equipment

- 1 Large pot of boiling water
- 2 large bowls, one filled with cold water and ice.
- 1 sharp knife
- Vacuum food sealer or "Ziploc" type freezer bags (the freezer bag version is heavier and protects better against freezer burn).



Instructions

Step 1 - Get the asparagus!

This is the most important step! You need asparagus that is FRESH and crisp. Limp, old asparagus will make nasty tasting frozen asparagus. Look for young, tender, firm, crisp asparagus spears

Asparagus are of the best quality when they are tight, before the tips start to open.

How much asparagus and where to get it

You can grow your own, pick your own, or buy it at the grocery store. Start with fresh asparagus - as fresh as you can get.

Step 2 - Wash the asparagus!

I'm sure you can figure out how to rinse the asparagus in plain cold water.

Step 3 - Trim the asparagus

Sort into sizes, by diameter (thick, say half inch diameter) stalks require longer blanching than pencil sized spears. Trim stalks by removing scales with a sharp knife. Cut into even lengths to fit your freezing containers.

Step 4- Get the pots ready

Get the pot of boiling water ready (about 2/3 filled) and a LARGE bowl with ice and cold water. Use one gallon water per pound of prepared asparagus in each blanching batch.

Step 5 - Blanch the asparagus.

All fruits and vegetables contain **enzymes and bacteria** that, over time, break down the destroy nutrients and change the color, flavor, and texture of food during frozen storage. asparagus requires a brief heat treatment, called **blanching, in boiling water or steam**, to destroy the enzymes before freezing. Blanching times for asparagus is:

- small spears(the thickness of a pencil) 2 minutes,
- medium spears 3 minutes and
- large spears (a half inch or more in diameter) 4 minutes.

These durations are just long enough to stop the action of the enzymes and kill the bacteria.

- Put the vegetables in a blanching basket and lower into vigorously boiling water.
- Place a lid on the blancher.
- The water should return to boiling within 1 minute, or you are using too much vegetable for the amount of boiling water.
- Start counting blanching time as soon as the water returns to a boil. Keep heat high for the time given in the above.

You may use the same blanching water several times (up to 5). Be sure to add more hot water from the tap from time to time to keep the water level at the required height.

Step 6 - Cool the asparagus

Cool asparagus immediately in ice water. Drain the asparagus thoroughly (this shouldn't take more than a minute).

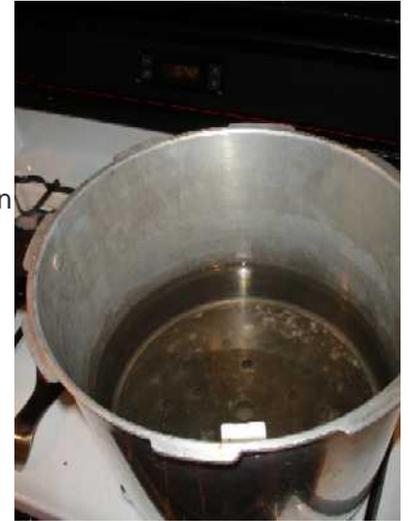
After vegetables are blanched, cool them quickly to prevent overcooking. Plunge the asparagus into a large quantity of ice-cold water (I keep adding more ice to it). A good rule of thumb: Cool for the same amount of time as the blanch step. For instance, if you blanch the asparagus for 3 minutes, then you should cool it in ice water for at least 3 minutes.

Drain thoroughly.

Step 7 - Bag the asparagus

I love the **FoodSavers** (and [see this page for more information](#)) with their vacuum sealing! I am not paid by them, but these things really work. If you don't have one, Ziploc bags work, too, but it is hard to get as much air out of the bags. Remove the air to prevent drying and freezer burn.

TIP: If you don't own a vacuum food sealer to freeze foods, place food in a Ziploc bags, zip the top shut but leave enough space to insert the tip of a soda straw. When straw is in place, remove air by sucking the air out. To remove straw, press straw closed where inserted and finish pressing the bag closed as you remove straw.



Step 8 - Done!

Pop them into the freezer, on the quick freeze shelf, if you have one!

Freezing keeps asparagus safe to eat almost indefinitely, but the recommended maximum storage time of 12 months is best for taste and quality. The quality of the frozen asparagus is maintained best in a very cold freezer (deep freezer), and one that keeps them frozen completely with no thaw cycles. Excluding any air from inside the bags which leads to freezer burn, by using vacuum-sealed bags, is also important to maintaining quality.

I love the FoodSavers ([see this page for more information](#)) with their vacuum sealing! Here's an example of one model:

FoodSaver Vacuum food sealers advanced Design

This one is the least expensive of the Food Saver models that has all the advanced features, like automatic bag detection and sealing, which makes it faster and easier to seal. And yes, you can seal and freeze foods with liquids (just freeze the unsealed bag in the freezer overnight, THEN seal it!)

Features

- Home vacuum-packaging system vacuums, seals, and shuts off automatically
- Upright vacuum-sealing appliance with SmartSeal technology keeps food fresh longer
- Push-button operation; built-in roll storage and cutter; automatic liquid detection
- Crush-free instant seal; 2 vacuum speeds; 2 seal levels; progress lights; integrated bag opener
- Marinate and canister modes; includes 3 quart-size bags, 2 gallon-size bags, and a roll of bag material
- Measures approximately 6 by 18-8/9 by 10-2/5 inches; 1-year limited warranty

The blanching times presented are based on the Ball Blue Book Guidelines and "So Easy to Preserve", 5th ed. 2006. Bulletin 989, Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia, Athens. Revised by Elizabeth L. Andress, Ph.D. and Judy A. Harrison, Ph.D., Extension Foods Specialists.

More About Blanching

Blanching (scalding vegetables in boiling water or steam for a short time) is a must for almost all vegetables to be frozen. It stops enzyme actions which can cause loss of flavor, color and texture.

Blanching cleanses the surface of dirt and organisms, brightens the color and helps retard loss of vitamins. It also wilts or softens vegetables and makes them easier to pack.

Blanching time is crucial and varies with the vegetable and size. Underblanching stimulates the activity of enzymes and is worse than no blanching. Overblanching causes loss of flavor, color, vitamins and minerals.

There are different types of blanching

For home freezing, the most satisfactory way to heat all vegetables is in boiling water, although in a few cases, steam blanching makes more sense. Use a blancher (a large pot with a sieve / strainer pocket insert) which has a blanching basket and cover, or fit a wire basket into a large pot with a lid.

Tips:

- Harvest early in the morning, especially if the weather is hot, to get peak flavor.
- Harvest the asparagus at its peak maturity (firm, straight, no florets opening, dark green, not yellowing)
- Process promptly after harvesting, or keep cooled in the fridge or with ice until then.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. I've frozen asparagus but it seem so limp and fell apart. Any idea why?

Generally, that means the asparagus was overcooked. It only takes 90 seconds in steam or boiling water to heat/cook the asparagus after removing it from the freezer

2. How long can they be frozen?

It depends upon how cold is your freezer and how you packed them. Colder (deep freezes) are better than frost free compartments, which actually cycle above freezing (that's how they melt the ice). Vacuum packing results in longer storage capability, too. Thicker bags also help prevent freezer burn.

In general, up to 9 months in a Ziploc bag in an ordinary freezer, and 14 months in a deep freeze in a vacuum packed bag. After that, they asparagus won't make you sick; they just won't taste as good.