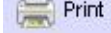


PickYourOwn.org

Where you can find a pick-your-own farm near you!

Click on the printer icon that looks like this:  (at the top left, to the right of "save a copy") to print!

See www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm for many other canning directions and recipes

How to Freeze Berries!

(blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, gooseberries, tayberries, loganberries, strawberries, saskatoons, cranberries, marionberries, boysenberries, etc.)

If you like berries in the winter, for muffins, pancakes, cobblers, pies or just in a bowl; just imagine how good it would taste if you had picked a couple of quarts fresh or bought a them from a farm stand and then quickly froze them at home! It is also one of the simplest ways to put up a fruit for the winter. Here's how to do it, complete instructions in easy steps and completely illustrated. Your own frozen berries will taste MUCH better than anything you've ever had from a store. I'm using blueberries as an example, but this same process works exactly the same for any other berries listed above. Strawberries are different in that you must remove the hulls (the green cap) after washing, but otherwise the same.

This also works for cherries, but you may want to pit them before freezing them.

Directions for Freezing Berries

Ingredients and Equipment

- fresh berries - any quantity
- Vacuum food sealer or "ziploc" type freezer bags (the freezer bag version is heavier and protects better against freezer burn.
- a pan or tray that will fit in your freezer
- a strainer or colander

Instructions

Step 1 - Get yer berries!

Start with the freshest berries you can get. Look for plump, full berries with a good color. I've used blueberries as an example, but these directions would equally well for any other berry (blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, etc.) See the [picking tips page](#) for other berries.



Step 2 - Wash the berries (EXCEPT for blueberries)

Just rinse them gently in cold water. I put a colander or strainer in a large bowl, fill it with cold water and swirl the berries in it with my fingers. That avoids breaking them and dirt either floats, which I pick out, or sinks and is removed when I lift the strainer out of the bowl.



NOTE about blueberries: Do not wash blueberries and related (saskatoons). According to U.Ga, and [Clemson University](#) extensions,

washing results in a tougher skinned product. (Frankly, I've never noticed a difference, but I use frozen blueberries in cooked pies, anyway). They say to wash them after you remove them from the freezer to use. This only applies to blueberries and saskatoons. For those, just pick the dirt out, and wash them later when you thaw them

Step 3 - Drain the berries

Use a large sieve or colander to remove as much water as possible. I usually let them sit for about 10 minutes in the colander.

Step 4 - Spread the berries in a pan

There are two ways of doing this. If you have space in your freezer, spread the berries out in a large oven pan with a lip or ridge. Put enough on to make 1 layer. this way they will freeze quickly and not be frozen together in a lump, so later you can remove only what you need without thawing the rest.



If your freezer isn't that big, just drain as much of the water as you can, then put them into whatever container will fit in your freezer. After they are frozen, they may stick together a little bit, but should break apart fairly easily.



Step 5 - Put them in the freezer

Pop them into the coldest part of the freezer, or the quick freeze shelf, if your freezer has one!

I leave them in the freezer overnight, to get completely frozen.



Step 6 - Bag the berries

I love the FoodSavers ([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. On the left is the bag with frozen berries before vacuum sealing, and to the right is the same bag after vacuum sealing. Of course, you can use ziploc bags (see below), but they leave a lot more air in, which allows some freezer burn.



Note: I typically write the labels on the bags with a Sharpie permanent marker BEFORE I fill the bags (it's easier) rather than after, as shown in step 7)

A tip for a low budget vacuum sealer:

"To remove the excess air from a ziploc bag, put a straw inside the bag and zip it closed as far as possible. Then suck the air out of the bag, pinch the straw shut where it enters the bag and pull it from the bag and quickly zip the bag the rest of the way"

Step 7 - Label the bags!

Of course, you'll want to label them with the contents and date, or all this work could be wasted, if you can't identify them later, or don't know how old they are.

Step 8 - Done!

Pop them into the deep freeze, or in the coldest part of your regular freezer!



When you are ready to use the berries - Thaw, wash and sort the berries.

To thaw them, just set them in the fridge overnight, or on the counter for a couple of hours. I wouldn't recommend the microwave unless you are planning to cook with them!

Note (again) about blueberries:

You can wash the frozen blueberries in a bowl of plain cold water. Then you need to pick out and remove any bits of stems, leaves and soft or mushy berries. It is easiest to do this in a large bowl of water and gently run your hands through the berries as they float. With your fingers slightly apart, you will easily feel any soft or mushy berries get caught in your fingers



Picking Tips:

- Harvest early in the morning, especially if the weather is hot, to get peak flavor.
- Harvest the berries at its peak maturity, but not overripe and mushy.
- Process promptly after harvesting, or keep cooled in the fridge or with ice until then.