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How to Make Homemade Frozen Peaches, Plums, Figs, Nectarines and Cherries

If you like peaches, nectarines or plums in the winter for 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.

In the winter when you pull them from the freezer, the fruit will taste MUCH better than anything you've ever had from a store, and by selecting the right fruit, it will use less sugar than store-bought frozen peaches. Peaches, plums, cherries or nectarines can be packed in very light, light or medium sugar syrup. They can also be packed in water, apple juice or white grape juice.

Prepared this way, the frozen fruit will have a freezer life of about 12 months, and aside from storing in a cool, dark place, require no special attention.

If you would rather can your fruit, see my page on [how to make home canned peaches from fresh!](#) It is really SO easy! And here are some [great and easy peach desert recipes!](#)

Directions for Making Frozen Peaches, Plums, Cherries, Nectarines, Figs and Other Similar Soft Fruit

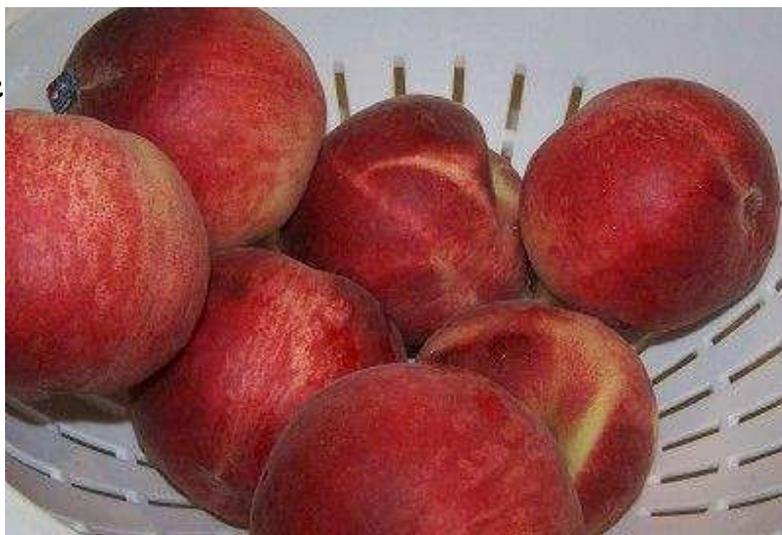
Ingredients and Equipment

- Fruit (see step 1)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at Wal-Mart)
- At least 1 large pot
- Large spoons and ladles
- Ziploc freezer bags, quart size or a vacuum food sealer and bags for it.
- Sugar (or other sweetener: Splenda, Nutrasweet, or fruit juice)

Recipe and Directions

Step 1 - Selecting the peaches, plums, cherries or nectarines

The most important step! You need peaches that are sweet, and to make the work easier, cling-free (also called freestone). This means that the peach separates easily from the pit! Same with nectarines, and this doesn't apply to cherries or plums.



Choose ripe, mature fruit. They should not be mushy, but they also should not be rock hard: just as ripe as you would eat them fresh. Green, unripe peaches will soften but will not ripen, nor have the flavor of tree-ripe peaches.

After this step, I'll just refer to "peaches" but it applies to plums, cherries and nectarines.

Step 2 - How many peaches and where to get them

You can pick your own, or buy them at the grocery store. For very large quantities (more than a few bushels), you'll find that real* farmer's markets, like the Farmer's Market in Forest Park, Georgia have them at the best prices.

It takes about 5 good sizes peaches or nectarines (or about 10 plums) to make one quart or frozen peaches.

* - not the cutesy, fake farmer's markets that are just warehouse grocery stores that call themselves farmer's markets.

Step 3 - Prepare the sugar (or other sweetener) solution

Peaches must be packed in a solution of water and sugar or fruit juice. It's up to you which to use. Sugar is added to improve flavor, help stabilize color, and retain the shape of the fruit. You only need enough solution to cover the peaches; about 1 cup per quart. It is not added as a preservative; but the solution does prevent drying, freezer burn and oxidation (browning). Peach, white grape or apple juice works great and is a natural alternative to using processed sugar!

Sugar Syrups			
Type of Syrup	Sugar	Water	Yield
Fruit juice (peach, apple or white grape)	0	0	4 cups
Splenda (2 cups)	0	6 cups	6 cups
Light sugar	2 cups	6 cups	7 cups
Medium sugar	3 cups	6 cups	6 1/2 cups
Heavy sugar	4 cups	6 cups	7 cups

<http://www.PickYourOwn.org/freezingpeaches.htm>

Fruit juice syrup requires no preparation. To prepare sugar and Splenda syrups, while heating the water in a pot on the stove (or microwave), add sugar slowly, stirring constantly to dissolve. Once it is dissolved remove it from the heat. After preparing the liquid syrup, let it cool before mixing it with the peaches!



Step 4 - Wash the peaches!



I'm sure you can figure out how to wash the peaches in plain cold or lukewarm water.

Step 5 - Peeling the Peaches



Nope, we're not going to peel them by hand; that's way too much work. Instead, here's a great trick that works with many fruits and vegetables with skins (like tomatoes): just dip the fruit in boiling water for 20 to 45 seconds.

<http://www.PickYourOwn.org/freezingpeaches.htm>



Remove from the boiling water using a slotted spoon and put into a large bowl or pot of cold water and ice for several minutes



The skins will easily slide off now!

Nectarines do not need to be peeled, if you don't mind the skins. Neither do peaches, but most people prefer them with skins off - they tend to be slimy after all this.

Step 6 - Cut up the peaches



Cut out any brown spots and mushy areas. Cut the peaches in half, or quarters or slices, as you prefer! Remove pits!

<http://www.PickYourOwn.org/freezingpeaches.htm>

Step 7 - Prevent the fruit from darkening!



Peaches will turn brown when exposed to air, even air in a sealed, sterile jar. To keep the fruit from turning brown, when you get a bowlful, sprinkle 1/4 cup lemon juice or Fruit-Fresh (which is just citric acid, vitamin C, perfectly natural). Then stir the peaches to make sure all the surfaces have been coated.



Step 8 - Mix the peaches with the sweetener solution



In a large bowl, combine the peaches and sweetener solution. Mix completely.

Step 9 - Fill the bags and exclude air pockets

Ladle the peaches and solution into the freezer bags.

A. Ziploc Bags

If you are using ziploc bags, squeeze out any air bubbles and seal them. put them in the freezer on the coldest shelf. Since peaches, nectarines, plums, figs, and other soft fruit will be covered in a liquid, it is quite easy to remove all the air with a ziploc bag! Be sure to use the "freezer ziplocs", not the regular ones. The freezer ones are thicker and will be much less like to break, split or allow freezer burn. **TIP:** If you don't 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.



B. Vacuum Food Sealer

If you are using a vacuum food sealer, stand the bags upright on the shelves on the door of your freezer (so they don't spill) and allow them to freeze overnight (vacuum food sealers require liquids to be frozen first, or they would be sucked into the pump!)

The next day, take the bags out of the freezer, seal them and pop them back in the freezer!

If any of the frozen peaches are exposed on the surface, just pour a little more sugar syrup (or fruit juice, etc.) to cover them and put it back in the freezer. When that freezes, you can seal them.

At right, from top to bottom:

1. Peaches in foodsaver bags standing upright, unsealed, in the freezer; to be frozen.
2. Peaches in a foodsaver bag, waiting to be frozen, then sealed



Tips!

- To use 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!
- Allow about 1/2 inch of head space. Do not use glass because the expansion in the freezer will break the glass. (yes, if you leave enough headspace, it may work some of the time...)
- If fruit is not covered by liquid it may darken or get freezer burn during storage (but does not necessarily mean it is spoiled, as all fruits will darken somewhat). To avoid this, remove all air bubbles and while the bags are freezing, stand them so that the fruit is entirely covered by liquid.



Other Equipment:

From left to right:

1. Jar lifting tongs to pick up hot jars
2. Lid lifter - to remove lids from the pot of boiling water (sterilizing)
3. Lid - disposable - you may only use them once
4. Ring - holds the lids on the jar until after the jars cool - then you don't need them.
5. Canning jar funnel - to fill the jars and keep the rims clean.

