

USE OF DRIED PRODUCTS*

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Many people who attempt the drying of fruit and vegetables this year will be anxious to know how to prepare the dried products for table use. Products properly dried do not contain more than 25 per cent of water and it will be necessary for them to re-absorb a large additional percentage of water before they are ready for table use: A bushel of apples, for example, which weighs about fifty pounds, consists of about 42 pounds of water and 8 pounds of dry material. After allowing for about 4 pounds of waste material, the resulting dried product of about 8 pounds still contains about 25 per cent of water. When dried beyond a certain limit, it is found that it is very difficult for the product to soak up the water lost by drying and thereby return to its original form.

Fruits and vegetables, when properly dried, have not undergone any chemical change in composition such as that which takes place when they are cooked preparatory to canning. The skill in properly drying garden produce should be supplemented, therefore, by care and skill in preparing them for use.

The following instructions with regard to preparation have been found successful in recent practice. In some cases, however, individuals will find that slight variation in these recipes may give better results. This will be due to the fact that the method of drying adopted is a big factor in the final result. Some products are better when dried in the sun, others when dried over the stove. Drying methods are discussed in a separate booklet, issued by the Canada Food Board and entitled "Fruit and Vegetables: Canning, Drying, Storing," and it is not necessary to discuss the subject in detail here. Attention should, however, be called to the fact that, if dried products be mouldy, it is an indication that they were not sufficiently dry when stored. If, on the other hand, they be too crisp and brittle and do not soak up water as they should, it is an indication that they were dried too rapidly or at too high temperature. Improperly-dried products will not, of course, give the most satisfactory results. Properly-dried vegetables or fruit should be leathery and pliable. A test may be made by cutting off an end from a dried piece of vegetable or fruit and attempting to press water out of the freshly-cut end. If it can be so pressed without breaking under the pressure and, at the same time, does not show any indication of water, this may be taken as proof that it has been properly dried and that water may be soaked up according to the recipes as given below.

Best results are always obtained from young and tender vegetables of good quality. These will not deteriorate by drying. The fibre, however, of the older vegetables and fruits has a tendency to become hardened by the drying process and when prepared for use does not, of course, compare with the better-quality produce.

GENERAL PREPARATION

- 1.—Soak for several hours in warm or cold water to absorb the moisture lost through evaporation.
- 2.—Drain and boil such vegetables as peas, beans and spinach in soda water, using about one-eighth teaspoonful of soda to one quart of water.
- 3.—One tablespoonful of lemon juice added to dried beans, after soaking them, will improve the flavour.
- 4.—Add seasoning to the dried vegetables to make them more palatable—celery, mustard, onions, cheese, nutmeg, etc.

*For information as to how to dry fruit and vegetables at home, see the Canada Food Board booklet, uniform with this, on "Fruit and Vegetables: Canning, Drying and Storing." Copies may be obtained at a price of 5 cents each upon application to the Canada Food Board, Ottawa.