

# Food Preservation

## General Preservation Methods:

1. **To remove bacteria, mold, and pests:** Wash vegetables in a solution of salt, vinegar, or baking soda. Shake off the excess liquid (or spin dry) and place them in the refrigerator.
2. **Preserve food using salt:** Salted radishes, soy sauce (turons), fermented tofu (chao), miso paste.
3. **Using sugar to cook fruit into jam/preserves** (sên trái cây làm mứt).
4. **Using alcohol (wine/liquor):** To eliminate the fishy odor in meat/fish, and to preserve fresh color (e.g., mixing into gac fruit pulp).
5. **Using a layer of oil on the surface to prevent oxidation:** For example, pouring a layer of oil over pâté or an open jar of oyster sauce.
6. **Boiling in a salt solution:** Boiling fried tofu prevents it from becoming sour/slimy for two weeks, and this method also removes the surface oil from frying.
7. **Sun-drying or dehydrating:** Dried fruits, wood ear mushrooms (nấm mèo), shiitake mushrooms (nấm đông cô, nấm hương).
8. **Freezing:** Cook large batches of black beans and chickpeas, divide them into individual bags, and store them in the freezer for gradual consumption. Freeze pineapple, lemon juice, avocado, etc.
9. **Vacuum sealing:** Using the buoyant force of water or a straw (as a DIY method).
10. **Continuing to soak and keep moist under plastic wrap/bags (for herbs):** Basil, mint, etc. Soaking unused lemongrass stalks in water keeps them fresh and allows them to root.
11. **Storing roasted nuts and seeds in airtight containers** with a moisture-absorbing packet, and keeping them in the refrigerator. Walnuts quickly turn rancid if left at room temperature.
12. **Canning industry techniques use chemical preservatives:** Sodium benzoate, potassium sorbate, sulfites, nitrates, nitrites, BHA, BHT, ascorbic acid (Vitamin C).

## Specific Food Preservation Methods for Specific Food

### Potatoes

- **Storage:** Do not wash them when you buy them; it's okay if they still have some dirt. Place them in an oil-proof paper bag or a cardboard box. Store in a **dark, cool, and dry place**, away from other vegetables.
- **Anti-Sprouting/Green Skin Method:** Spray the potato surface with a solution (200 ml filtered water + 20 ml vinegar + 1 tsp baking soda), then place them in a tightly closed cardboard box away from light.

### Garlic

- **Method #1:** Place a small amount of salt and dried tea leaves together with the garlic in a black nylon bag and seal it tightly.
- **Method #2:** Store garlic together with rice in a sealed container.

#### *Peeling Garlic*

- To make peeling easier, separate the cloves and soak them in **warm water (160°F)** for 10-15 minutes.
- **Storage (Paste):** Grind the garlic, divide it into small portions, and **freeze** for gradual use.

### Cucumbers

- Wash thoroughly, soak in a vinegar solution for 5 minutes, wipe dry, and place them in a nylon bag lined with a paper towel. Store in the refrigerator's crisper drawer, leaving the bag slightly open.

### Mushrooms (Baby Bella or Button)

- Rinse lightly under the faucet to clean off dirt, pat dry, and store in a nylon bag with a paper towel in the refrigerator's cool compartment; do not seal the bag tightly.
- **Freezing Method:** Wash clean, shake dry, cut into bite-sized pieces, and then flash freeze.

## Coriander (Cilantro)

- Wash clean, dry using a salad spinner and wrap in a layer of paper towel, then place in a nylon bag, and refrigerate.

## General Herbs

- Herbs should be soaked in a salt solution for 10 minutes, rinsed clean, and spun dry before being placed in a nylon bag.

## Ginger

- **Method #1 (Freezing):** Freeze puréed ginger, portioned into small bags for single use. Keep the whole root or cut pieces frozen; the flavor is retained when cooked.
- **Method #2 (Traditional):** Bury the whole ginger root in dry sand.
- **Method #3:** Store ginger with rice in a ziplock bag.
- **Method #4 (Refrigeration):** Wrap ginger in aluminum foil or paper towel, place it in a ziplock bag, and refrigerate.

Important Note: Remember to remove any spoiled or rotten parts and ensure the produce is thoroughly cleaned (ideally using water mixed with baking soda for sterilization) and completely dry before sealing it using the methods above.

## Limes/Lemons

- **Long-Term Storage (Whole):** If you have many limes/lemons, bury them in dry sand, seal, and store in a dry, cool place.
- **Method #2 (Refrigeration):** Wash the fruit with a diluted vinegar solution (no need to rinse with water afterward), wipe dry, wrap each fruit individually in a paper towel, and place in a ziplock bag in the refrigerator.
- **Method #3 (Freezing Juice):** Freeze the juice using an ice cube tray. This makes it easy and convenient to use 1-2 cubes at a time.

## Water Spinach or Ong Choy

- **Method #1 (Short-Term, Room Temp):** Discard wilted or bruised leaves. Wash the whole bunch, trim the bottom portion of the stems. Soak the cut ends in a solution (1 TBsp sugar + 1 Lit water) kept in a vase and cover the whole thing with a nylon bag. Water spinach will stay fresh for about *3 days at room temperature*.

- **Method #2 (Freezing):** Pick all the leaves to eat first. For the stems, discard the bottom 2 inches. Cut the remaining stems into 3-inch sections, place them in a ziplock bag, try to suck out the air, and freeze. When you want boiled vegetables, just bring water to a boil, add a little salt, and drop the frozen water spinach in. The boiled vegetable will still be as green as fresh ones. You can also stir-fry them directly from frozen.

## Pineapple

- Cut fresh pineapple into small pieces. Sprinkle a little salt into a ziplock bag or container, add the pineapple, and freeze. The pineapple will not stick together when frozen, making it easy to take out small amounts for use.

## Avocado

- Once an avocado is ripe, place it in the refrigerator to stop the ripening process.
- Alternatively, soak the whole fruit in water.
- To prevent browning on a half-eaten avocado: Squeeze lemon juice onto the surface and wrap it in plastic; or brush a layer of oil to prevent oxidation when exposed to air.

## Tomatoes

- Store at room temperature, stem-side down.
- If you want them to ripen faster, put them in a spot with a little sunlight.
- If you have too many, make a sauce and freeze it.

## Strawberries

- Discard any spoiled berries. Mix 2 liters of water with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of 5% vinegar, soak the strawberries (with stems still attached) for 5 minutes, gently swirling to dislodge dirt and pests.
- Remove the berries to a colander, rinse with water, and then lay the individual strawberries on a towel to dry (you can also pat them dry with a paper towel).
- Once the strawberries are completely dry, gently place them in a glass jar with a piece of paper towel lining the bottom. Seal the lid and refrigerate. This method keeps the strawberries fresh and clean for a very long time, ready to eat when needed.

## Bananas

- Wrap the stem/crown of the bunch with plastic wrap. Leave 2-3 bananas unwrapped so they ripen faster to be eaten first.

- Keeping bananas in the refrigerator's cool compartment can slow down the ripening process. The skin will turn brown/darken, but the flesh inside will remain fresh and tasty.

## Leftover Cooked Rice

After a meal, rice should be stored in the refrigerator instead of being left on the "keep warm" setting overnight. Cooling and reheating the rice creates resistant starch, which is beneficial for people with diabetes.

- You can also freeze leftover rice to save it for making porridge. When cooking the porridge, add a little glutinous rice (*sweet rice*) to make it thick and creamy, and also add some frozen black beans or red beans.

## Non-Perishable/Long-Lasting Foods

- Foods that do not spoil easily over a long period: Sugar, honey, salt, vinegar, soy sauce, rolled oats, cornstarch, pasta, rice noodles (*bún*), glass noodles (*miến*), beans, rice.
- Peanut butter can last for several years if unopened.

## General Tips

- It is better to store food in glass containers than plastic boxes.
- When reheating food in the microwave, it should also be placed in glass or ceramic bowls/plates and covered with a glass lid or ceramic plate. Do not wrap food in plastic when heating. You can also cover the food with a damp paper towel.
- **Frozen Coconut Milk:** Does coconut milk spoil when thawed? The clumps that form are due to the fat separating when cold. Heat it up, and it can be used normally.

### Thawing Methods:

- Move it to the refrigerator compartment 1-2 days before use.
- Leave it out at room temperature.
- Defrost using a microwave.
- Place it on a metal plate or tray; the cold heat will quickly transfer into the metal surface.

## Emergency food Storage

- **Emergency foods** for disaster preparedness should be kept in a cool place.
- **Periodically check** (e.g., at the beginning of the month) and use items that are nearing their expiration date.
- **Examples of Emergency Foods:** Drinking water, instant noodles, canned goods, protein bars.