



Preserving Those Colorful Garden Peppers

The colorful medley of red, green, yellow—even purple and orange—peppers may be preserved by freezing, canning, drying, pickling or making into relishes, jams and jellies.

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The most common peppers are the mild, sweet, thick fleshed bell pepper; the even milder pimiento pepper; and the hotter chili and jalapeno peppers. Some gardeners include the much hotter serrano, cayenne and habanero among their favorites.

Freezing Peppers

Bell and other sweet peppers can be [frozen](#)

blanched or raw. Blanched peppers are good for use in cooking. Peppers frozen without blanching are good to use in uncooked foods because they have a crisper texture. They can also be used in cooked food. Raw frozen peppers may be chopped or sliced and need no headspace.

[Whole hot peppers](#) can be frozen raw after they are washed and stems are removed. Be cautious when handling hot peppers. Wear plastic gloves and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching your face.

Canning Peppers

Many types of peppers can be canned, but **peppers that are not acidified in the pickling process must be processed in a pressure canner because they are a low acid food.** [Let's Preserve Peppers](#) has detailed instructions on canning this low acid food.

To remove the skin from peppers use the [oven, broiler or range top method](#). Small whole peppers do not need the skin removed.

To prevent whole peppers from floating to the top of the jar, slit peppers which will allow air inside the pepper to escape.

Marinated or Pickled Peppers

Marinated peppers are normally made with sweet red, yellow and green peppers. Note that marinated peppers are canned in an oil-vinegar solution. Because the oil in a closed jar at room temperature is a good host for dangerous bacteria, additional acidity must be provided. The USDA recipe adds bottled lemon juice as well as vinegar. It is also necessary to make sure the oil/pickling solution is well mixed and evenly distributed among the jars.

Use research tested recipes such as these to ensure the safety of your pickled peppers:

- [Hot Peppers](#)
- [Pickled Yellow Pepper Rings](#)
- [Marinated Peppers](#)

One variety of pepper can be substituted for another in a pickle or relish recipe. For a milder flavor, bell peppers can be substituted for hot peppers. For safety, keep the total amount the same. It is safe to reduce the amount of a low acid vegetable such as pepper or onion in a recipe, but never add more in relation to the amount of pickling solution.

Crispy Pickled Peppers

When vegetables absorb calcium they become crisper. Some food preservers have used lime to crisp pickles, but the form of calcium in lime lowers the acidity of the

product if the excess is not totally rinsed off the pickled product.

Pickles, including pickled peppers, can be made crisper by adding calcium chloride granules. Calcium chloride does not lower the acidity in the jar and is safer to use than lime. It is used in commercially canned pickles. Calcium chloride is available for home canning under the brand names of Ball®, Pickle Crisp™ and Mrs. Wages® Xtra Crunch™.

Follow directions on the label to determine the amount to use. The granules are added to the filled jar before the lid is applied.

Refrigerator Pickled Peppers

Pickles made with fresh peppers and brined in a flavored vinegar solution can be stored in a refrigerator for a short period of time. These are crisp and tasty on sandwiches or as an accompaniment to a meal.

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension's recipe for [Yellow Banana Pepper Refrigerator Pickle Rings](#) works very well.

Drying Peppers

- For drying bell-type peppers and pimientos, select fresh, firm well-shaped bright colored peppers with thick walls. Wash, stem and core. Remove partitions and membranes.
- Peppers may be cut into 3/8 inch pieces or cut into 1/4 to 3/8 inch slices. Blanching is not needed. Place on dryer trays. Small pieces will need to be placed on a mesh liner to prevent falling through the tray.
- Start dryer at 140°F for 2 hours and then decrease temperature to 130°F until dry. They are dry when they are tough to brittle.
- Cool. Store in an airtight container in a dark, cool place.
- Exposure to light causes peppers to fade quickly. Dried peppers stored in the refrigerator or freezer will retain their color best.

Note: The skins of large pieces of rehydrated peppers tend to be tough. Reduce this problem by chopping or grinding peppers to a powder in a blender. Use to season stews, soups and other dishes, or mix into sour cream for a dip. Combining several varieties of peppers, onions and spices makes a tasty seasoning mix. Hot varieties of

whole pods that have been blended to a powder make cayenne pepper or chili powder.

Diced chili peppers dry faster than whole ones resulting in better color and aroma. Chilies can be dried whole if conditions are dry and warm enough and the environment is free of insects. Dried whole chilies should appear shriveled and dark red and feel crisp. Remember to wear gloves when preparing hot peppers for drying.