Freezing Peas and Butter Beans

Fresh field peas and butter beans are in season year-round if you have a home freezer. Freezing can help peas and beans keep their natural color, fresh flavor, and nutritive value.

Vegetables are best for freezing when they are taken straight from the garden. The fresher they are, the better the frozen product will be. Peas and beans should be so fresh that the pods pop open with a twist. They should not be limp or slimy.

Steps for Freezing

1. Select young, tender beans or peas free of blemishes.

2. After shelling, wash the peas or beans thoroughly, lifting them up and down in the water. Use several changes of water because dirt from the peas and beans will settle to the bottom of the pan. For easier handling, wash the peas and beans in a wire basket.

3. Pick out any peas or beans that have dark spots on them.

4. The next step—blanching—is necessary to stop the action of enzymes, substances that cause harvested vegetables to decay. If not blanched, peas and butter beans develop off-flavors while frozen and produce a bad odor when cooked.

Use a large, covered pot for blanching. Be sure it will hold 1 gallon of water and still leave 3 inches of head space. Bring the water to a vigorous boil, then lower a large basket or thin cloth sack containing about 1 pint of peas or beans into the pot. Replace the lid. Be sure the range unit is on high. When the water returns to a boil, let it boil for 3 minutes. Watch the pot to make sure it doesn’t boil over.

5. Pour peas or beans into a colander or another large basket. Cool them quickly and thoroughly to stop them from cooking. You can cool them by plunging them into a large amount of water with ice in it. If you don’t have ice, use cold water. Remove the peas or beans after they have cooled for 3 minutes.

6. Pack the peas or beans in moisture-vapor-resistant freezer containers. Pack them closely to eliminate free air space. If you use polyethylene freezer bags, place them in cover boxes before filling. This is a must to keep your bags from tearing. This also makes the packages easier to stack in the freezer.

7. Pour ice water over packaged peas or beans to remove air. Allow at least ½-inch head space in pint containers and 1 inch in quarts. If you use polyethylene freezer bags, start twisting the bag at the top of the vegetable. Turn the twisted end down and fasten with a rubber band (or similar closure) about ½ inch from the peas or beans. This allows water to expand during freezing.

8. Label your package with the name of the food and the date it was frozen. Place the package in the freezer immediately. If packages are allowed to stand at room temperature before being frozen, the vegetables may lose their flavor and vitamins or they may sour. Peas and butter beans must be frozen at 0 degrees F or lower. Because foods lose quality or spoil if not frozen quickly, do not put more food into the freezer than will freeze in 24 hours. Most home freezers can freeze 2 or 3 pounds of food per cubic foot of freezer space in a 24-hour period. If you overload the freezer, you slow down the rate of freezing and risk spoiling the entire lot.
Nutritive Value

Peas and butter beans contain nutrients that are important to good health. A one-half cup serving gives you:

- Protein—to build body tissues
- Calcium—to build bones and teeth
- Iron—to produce red blood cells
- Fiber—to aid in digestion and elimination
- Vitamin A—to promote healthy vision
- Vitamin C—to heal wounds and fight infection
- Riboflavin, niacin, and thiamin—to aid digestion, keep nerves and skin in good condition, and help cells use food.

Serving Ideas

Peas or butter beans may be served as a vegetable to complete a meal or as a main dish. Here is a suggested menu:

- Broiled chicken
- Mashed potatoes
- Field peas or butter beans
- Peach half
- Corn bread muffin
- Milk

What Did You Learn?

Match the following.

1. Moisture-vapor-resistant freezer containers
2. Enzymes
3. 0 degrees F
4. Blanching
5. 2 to 3 pounds per cubic foot
6. Protein
7. Iron
8. Vitamin C

   a. Helps the body produce red blood cells.
   b. Temperature at which peas and beans must be frozen.
   c. Temperature at which vegetables may lose their flavor and vitamins or sour.
   d. Always freeze peas and butter beans in these.
   e. Helps the body heal wounds and fight infection.
   f. Substances that cause vegetables to decay.
   g. Amount of food most home freezers can freeze safely in 24 hours.
   h. Helps build body tissues.
   i. Boiling vegetables, then cooling them quickly.

Things You Can Do

1. Using peas or butter beans, help prepare the meal suggested under Serving Ideas. How did your family like it? ______________________

2. Write another menu in which you could use butter beans or peas.
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

3. Help select, shell, and wash peas or butter beans for freezing.
4. Help an adult freeze peas or butter beans. Write down what you did.
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

5. Show someone what you learned about freezing peas and butter beans.
6. Keep a record of everything you freeze. Write it on a record sheet.