

# SQUASH

## VALUE-ADDED ON-FARM PROCESSING

For farmers interested in producing value-added produce for farmers markets.



### Summer Squash Varieties That Freeze Well

- Chayote
- Crookneck
- Pattypan
- Straightneck
- White scallop
- Zucchini

### Freezing

- Freezing 40 pounds of summer squash will yield 16 to 20 quarts or 2 to 3 pounds for a quart jar.
- Choose young, tender squash.
- Wash the squash well and cut it into ½-inch slices.
- Blanch for 3 minutes in boiling water.
- Cool in ice water, drain, and package it in freezer containers.
- Leave ½ inch of headspace.
- Fasten lids or seals securely and freeze.

### Another option is to grate and freeze squash for baking purposes:

- Choose young, tender zucchini.
- Wash and grate the zucchini.
- Steam blanch small quantities of the grated zucchini for 1 to 2 minutes until translucent.
- Pack measured amounts needed for baking into freezer containers, leaving ½ inch of headspace in the container.
- Cool the container by placing it in cold water.
- Label the container with name of food, amount, and date it was put in the freezer, then freeze it.
- Thaw containers of frozen zucchini in the refrigerator.

## Freeze Drying

### Winter Squash

- It is best to cook the squash in your preferred method before freeze-drying as the firm flesh reconstitutes better if precooked.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for your unit.

### Summer Squash

- Summer squash can be freeze-dried raw or cooked.
- Pre-freezing will shorten the drying time. Squash needs to be frozen solid if the pre-freezing step is used.
- Follow the manufacturer's directions for your unit.

## Storing

### Fresh Squash

- Store fresh squash in the refrigerator crisper in plastic storage bags or containers to retain moisture.
- Stored in this manner, squash will maintain quality for 5 to 7 days.
- Avoid storing fresh squash in areas that might freeze.

## Frozen Squash

- Label and date packages.
- Properly packaged and frozen, squash should maintain high quality for 6 months to 1 year in the freezer at 0 degrees F.

### Freeze-Dried Squash

- For short-term storage, store in glass canning jars with a lid. Use within weeks or months. Store in a cool, dry, dark place.
- For long-term storage, store in polyester film bags, such as Mylar bags. The product may keep for up to 25 years; however, many variables such as storage conditions, temperature, type of container used, and ingredients may shorten this time. It's best to rotate products and check periodically to ensure quality is maintained.
- Oxygen absorbers are often recommended to extend shelf life for freeze-dried foods.
- It is important to ensure that the product is thoroughly dried before storing in a reduced oxygen environment to prevent botulism toxin formation.
- Store the polyester film bags in containers that block rodent entry.



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