

Extension office gives tips on food preservation



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The food preservation questions are beginning to come into the Extension Office, and each year the question is asked whether it is really necessary to “blanch” vegetables before freezing them, and the answer is yes.

First, a few comments about freezing. Freezing is one of the easiest, most convenient, and least time-consuming methods of preserving foods. Freezing does not sterilize foods, but the extreme cold retards the growth of microorganisms and slows down chemical changes that affect quality or cause food to spoil.

Enzymes in fruits and vegetables are slowed down during freezing but are not

destroyed. If not inactivated, these enzymes can cause color and flavor changes as well as loss of nutrients. And this is why blanching is so important because enzymes in vegetables are inactivated by blanching.

Blanching is the exposure of the vegetable to boiling water or steam for a brief period of time. Immediately following the blanching process, the vegetable must then be rapidly cooled in ice water to prevent cooking. Even though

many publications on home freezing disregard the blanching method, it is essential for high quality frozen vegetables.

There are specific time recommen-

dations for certain vegetables, which are important to follow, considering over blanching results in a cooked product and a loss of flavor, color and nutrients. Under blanching stimulates enzyme activity and is worse than no blanching at all.

For a more detailed chart or to receive food preservation publications, please contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Rusk County, 113 E. Fordall, Henderson, 903-657-0376.

Vegetable	In Boiling Water (Minutes)	In Steam (Minutes)
Beans-Snap, Green, Wax	3	5
Beans-Lima, Butter, Pinto (Small)	2	3
Beans-Lima, Butter, Pinto (Medium)	3	5
Beans-Lima, Butter, Pinto (Large)	4	6
Okra (Small Pods)	3	5
Okra (Large Pods)	5	8
Peas - Field	2	2
Squash - Summer	3	5