

Ladies Have You Heard?

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Lancaster
Home Economist



BLANCH VEGETABLES BEFORE FREEZING

I have had many telephone calls this past week asking if it is necessary to blanch vegetables before freezing. The answer is yes, if you plan to store them for longer than a few weeks. Blanching improves their keeping quality and also preserves nutrients and color.

The enzymes which make vegetables mature remain active even after vegetables are frozen. If unblanched, vegetables become tough, woody and unappetizing. Blanching destroys these enzymes and halts the aging process.

Do not confuse blanching with cooking. To blanch, bring about 1 gallon of water to a boil. Place one pound of prepared vegetables in a wire basket and lower them into the boiling water. Cover

and start timing immediately. Do not wait for the water to return to a boil before you start timing.

As soon as the heating time is up, remove the vegetables from the water and plunge into cold ice water. It takes as long to chill the vegetables as it does to blanch them. After the vegetables have cooked, drain and package them, leaving the appropriate head space, then seal, label and freeze.

If you do not have an up-to-date freezer publication, contact your local County Extension Office. Ask for your free copy of Circular 534 - Preparing Food For Your Freezer.

VEGETABLES FROM A TO Z FOR OUTDOOR MEALS

Vegetables grow in great

variety - from A (asparagus) to Z (zucchini). They are, without a doubt, highest in quality and lowest in price when they are in season, as they are now during the Summer months.

This is also the season for barbecues, picnics on the beach, and al fresco dining in general. "Campfire vegetables," besides helping to balance your meals nutritionally, can also help your food budget. They taste so good that your family may develop a new appreciation for vegetables.

Whatever the main dish - hot dogs, hamburgers, steaks or chicken - plan to serve a cooked vegetable or two. Individual portions of vegetables may be cooked and served in packets of aluminum foil. Or you may cook family-size amounts and let each person help themselves.

Two-in-one combos are especially good. For example, team summer squash with thinly sliced onion, green peas with small onions, green beans with celery, or cut corn with green peppers.

Here's how arrange the prepared fresh vegetables on squares of aluminum foil. Use a single thickness of heavy duty foil or a double thickness of regular household foil. Add seasonings, salt, pepper and butter or margarine. Bring the foil up over the vegetables and seal all the edges to make an envelope.

Place the packets of vegetables over a hot grill. Turn them once or twice to make sure they cook evenly.

You will need to allow about half an hour depending on the type of vegetable, the size of the packet, and the heat of the fire.

For extra flavor, tuck in a sprig of parsley, celery tops, dried onion or a pinch of fresh or dried herbs.

Here is a recipe for Zucchini Casserole that should keep everyone coming back for more.

Zucchini Casserole

1 pound ground beef
6 cups thinly sliced zucchini
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bottled barbeque sauce
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup soft bread crumbs
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated parmesan cheese

In a large skillet, brown ground beef and zucchini slices, stirring frequently, 7 to 10 minutes or until slices are transparent. Pour barbeque sauce over zucchini and ground beef and toss until evenly mixed. Sprinkle with bread crumbs and then parmesan cheese. Place skillet 5 inches from broiler and broil for 1 to 2 minutes until crumbs are golden brown. Serves 4 to 5.

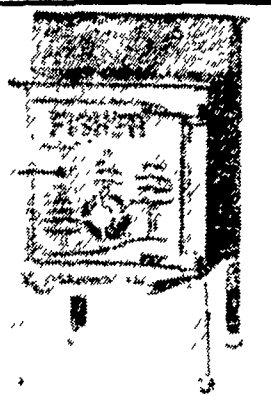
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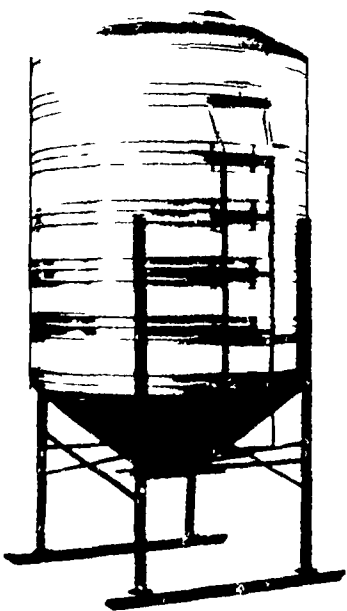
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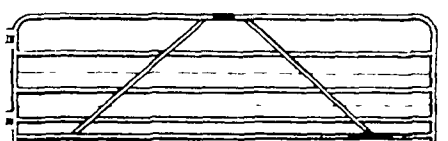
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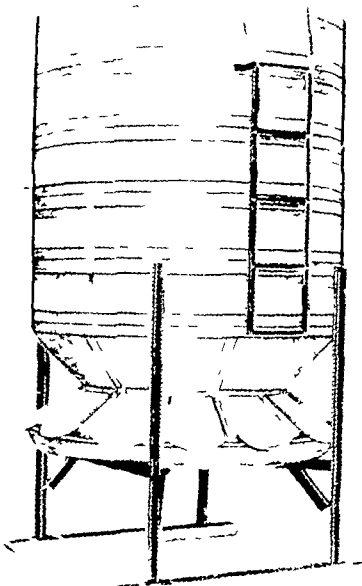
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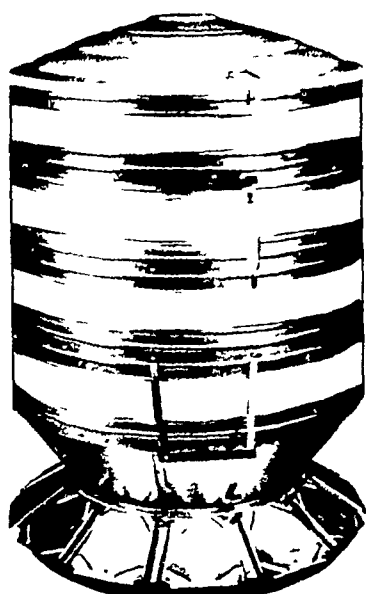
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