

# Don't Avoid Blanching

HONESDALE (Wayne Co.) — To blanch or not to blanch, that is the question. Pennsylvanians who decide against blanching vegetables before freezing them will likely regret it, says Wayne County Extension Director, Debra Bryant.

Blanching is scalding of vegetables in hot water or steam before packaging them for freezing. The vegetables must be heated through the center as quickly as possible to kill surface bacteria and inactivate plant enzymes. This prevents toughness, color change, loss of flavor, softening and loss of nutritive value.

But underblanching is worse than not blanching at all. A little extra heat can encourage problems. Blanching time varies with the type of vegetable.

Unblanched vegetables are safe to eat, the specialists stress, but they won't taste as good. The only vegetables that should not be blanched first are chopped onions or peppers.

There are also some vegetables which freeze better after they have been completely cooked. These include beets, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, pumpkin and winter squash.

Should microwaves be used to blanch vegetables? No.

Although microwave blanching may seem to save time, effort and energy, procedures currently available do not always result in a desirable quality after freezing. Because of uneven heating, parts of some vegetables may be adequately blanched while others are underblanched. Rapid heating also may produce an overcooked product.

All fresh vegetables except

onions and green peppers must be blanched before freezing to preserve nutrients, flavor, texture and color. Traditionally, blanching is done in boiling water or steam for specified times. Three research studies show microwave blanching results to be inferior to blanching by water or steam.

In testing, asparagus, green beans, peas and corn all retained more vitamin C and better color when blanched conventionally.

Microwave blanching tests produced tough broccoli, carrots and cauliflower as well as limp zucchini. Green beans not only were tough, but had a grassy odor and off-flavor.

For more information, request "How to Freeze Food-the Right Way" from the Wayne County Extension Office, 925 Court St., Honesdale, PA 18431. There is a small charge for this publication.



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## Carve Vegetables

(Continued from Page B14)

following categories: artistic arrangements, annual flowers, perennial flowers, bulbs, corms, rhizomes, tubers, vegetables, fruits, shrubs, herbs, house plants, and dried everlasting.

The Harvest Show is scheduled for Friday, August 20, from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Saturday, workshops begin at 9 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

The 1993 Berks County Harvest Show will be held at the Berks County Agricultural Center, County Road, Leesport.

General admission is \$2, but admission is free if you enter artistic arrangements or specimens. For more details, call Penn State Cooperative Extension at (717) 378-1327 or (717) 374-3455.



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With these tools, Al Consoli carves fruits and vegetables that he uses for garnishes and centerpieces.

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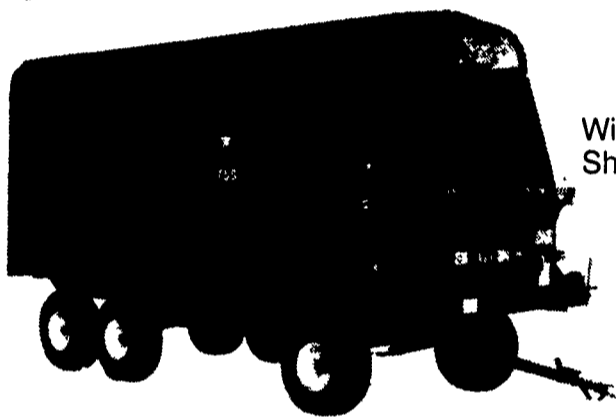
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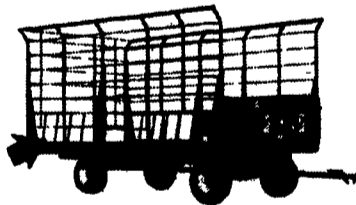
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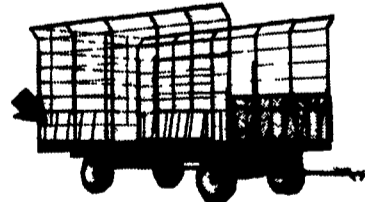
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