

Keep the Sweet Taste of Summer: How to Freeze Berries for Later

Getting more in your Kestrel Perch CSA share than you can use right away? It's surprisingly easy to freeze berries for later use. Here are a few ways to do it:

- To freeze berries you'll eventually be using in **yogurt, smoothies, or daiquiris**, etc., just wash the berries, remove off any hulls (stems), and mash or blend to a pulp. If you plan to use the berries in quantity, put them in appropriate size freezer containers or freezer bags, or re-use yogurt containers; then label and stick in the freezer. Ice cube trays are ideal for freezing little individual portions of mashed berries. Use a freezer bag to store any cubes you don't use right away.
 - SPECIAL TIP: When using lidded containers, leave an inch and a half of space at the top of – *don't fill to the max*, because berries expand as they freeze.
- **Berry popsicles or creamsicles** are yummy, and an easy variation on the ice cube technique. Just clean and mash berries and add sweetener or yogurt or cream (or not) to taste, and fill popsicle molds with the slurry. Or use ice cube trays with sticks stuck in.
- Want **nice-looking whole or sliced berries** for fruit salads, tarts, or pies? It's still pretty simple. For strawberry slices, wash the berries, remove any the hulls, and slice into a container or bag for the freezer. Whole or half berries can be "tray frozen" – preferably unwashed or at least well dried! Spread them on a cookie sheet and put in the freezer. Once they've frozen hard, pack the loose berries into freezer bags or containers. They'll stay separate, and you can pour out just as many as you need at one time.
 - SPECIAL TIP: Frozen berries lose juice when thawed. For a decorative touch on a cake, mousse or other dessert, add frozen berries at the last minute, before they thaw completely and start to ooze juice.
- **Berry syrup for pancakes** is a wonderful weekend brunch item in fall or winter. Just clean and slice or mash berries, add sweetener of your choice to taste (I was surprised to find that the taste of berries *is* compatible with maple syrup!), and cook to the desired consistency. When cool, put in freezer containers (remember, leave a good inch of "head space" at the top!), label, and freeze.
 - SPECIAL TIP: Warm syrup is a nice touch in cool weather. Transfer your frozen syrup to a microwavable container (running hot water over the outside of the freezer container will make it slip right out) and microwave a few minutes until warm.
- **Save 'em for jam!** Despite all warnings to the contrary, if you use a good pectin product and follow the recipe, *it is possible* to make jam from frozen berries. The trick is simply to *measure or weigh your fruit* before freezing (according to the directions in the jam recipe you'll be using) and record the volume or weight on your freezer label so you know how much you've got (and/or still need to add) when you get around to making the jam.