

# Chillin' With Fruits & Veggies

## A Simple Guide for Freezing and Preserving Your Produce

Whether you're harvesting your garden or saving foods from the local farmers market, freezing is a great way to keep healthy foods handy and fresh. Here are some simple and safe tips for preserving your produce to help you and your little ones enjoy local, nutrient-dense foods all year long.

### WHY FREEZE?

- Freezing maintains many essential vitamins and nutrients.
- Frozen foods can taste just as good as fresh — especially when they're used in a soup or smoothie.
- Freezing helps your foods last longer, saving you money.
- When you have frozen produce handy, you'll always have a convenient ingredient or snack ready to go.
- Frozen fruits can be a fun snack for kids, especially on a hot day!

### STEPS FOR PERFECT PRESERVATION

1. Wash and dry your produce.
2. Chop or slice as desired.
3. For best results, blanch vegetables (like green beans or broccoli) by briefly dipping them in boiling water for 2 - 3 minutes, followed by an ice bath.
4. Place prepared produce in freezer-safe airtight containers or freezer bags. Don't forget to label them with the date!
5. Store in the freezer at 0° F or lower, and enjoy whenever you need produce in a snap!

### PLAY IT SAFE: FREEZING GUIDELINES

- Wash all produce (and your hands!) before freezing.
- Use freezer-safe containers or bags designed for long-term storage.
- Label your bags and containers to track storage time.
- Make sure your freezer is set to 0°F or below.
- Keep your freezer clean of any spills or drips to prevent cross-contamination with meats.
- Defrost frozen foods by sticking them in the refrigerator, running them under cold water, or using the microwave. To prevent the growth of harmful bacteria, do not leave them sitting out at room temperature.
- For best quality, use fruits within 6 months and veggies within 12 months.
- Keep an eye out for freezer burn — while it doesn't make food unsafe, it can affect the taste. Look for dull color in frozen vegetables, which indicates foods may have been packaged improperly or stored too long.

### WHAT FOODS FREEZE WELL?

Most Michigan-grown fruits and veggies are great for freezing. A few that freeze especially well are blueberries, corn, strawberries, green beans, peaches, broccoli, apples, raspberries, and tomatoes.