



Using, Storing and Preserving Sweet Potatoes

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Michigan Fresh: Using, Storing and Preserving Sweet Potatoes was first published in June 2012 and revised in July 2023.

Sweet potatoes are generally not grown in Michigan because they require a long, hot growing season.

Sweet potatoes require a long, frost-free growing season and, therefore, are best suited for southern gardens.



Food Safety and Storage

- Purchase sweet potatoes that are firm, plump, blemish-free produce.
- Choose sweet potatoes with a bright, uniform color, and be sure there is no sign of decay.
- Raw sweet potatoes should not be refrigerated. Store in a cool (55–60 degrees F), dry, dark place, unwrapped, for up to two months or at room temperature for up to a week.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Wash sweet potatoes well under cool running water using a vegetable brush. Do not use soap.
- Keep sweet potatoes away from raw meat and juices to prevent cross-contamination.
- For best quality and nutritional value, do not preserve more than your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

2–3 pounds	=	1 quart
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How to Preserve Canning

Pressure canning is the *only* safe method of canning sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes *must* be pressure canned to avoid the potential of the foodborne illness botulism.

Choose small to medium potatoes. They should be mature but not fibrous.

Wash and boil until partially soft, 15–20 minutes. Cool slightly and peel away skins. Cut into uniform pieces, either sliced or quartered, but do not mash or puree. Pack into hot jars. Leave 1 inch of headspace. Fill to within 1 inch of the top with boiling water or boiling sugar syrup. Remove air bubbles; adjust headspace if needed. Wipe jar rims with clean paper towel, adjust the lids and process (see tables that follow for recommended processing times).

Lawn or garden questions?

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Recommended process time (in minutes) for sweet potatoes in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
			0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	4,001 - 6,000 ft	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Hot	Pints	65	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.
	Quarts	90	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.

Recommended process time (in minutes) for sweet potatoes in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of	
			0 - 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot	Pints	65	10 lb.	15 lb.
	Quarts	90	10 lb.	15 lb.

Let jars stand undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours, check lids to be sure they've sealed, remove rings, wash jars, date, label and store. Food in jars that do not seal must be reprocessed in a clean jar with a new lid within 24 hours, refrigerated or frozen.

Tables were adapted from from the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP), *Selecting, Preparing and Canning Vegetables: Potatoes, Sweet- Pieces or Whole*, reviewed February 2018 (https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_04/potato_sweet.html). The NCHFP adapted them from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (Agriculture Information Bulletin, No. 539). USDA, 2015.

Freezing

Allow sweet potatoes to cure for at least a week. This improves the flavor and allows the conversion of starch to sugar in the sweet potato. Cure sweet potatoes by keeping them at 80 to 85 degrees F and a humidity of 85 to 90 percent. After curing, wash well using a vegetable brush and cool running water. Cook before freezing; wrap in freezer wrap, place in freezer bags or vacuum package. If sweet potatoes are sliced or pureed, leave ½ inch of headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze. Use frozen sweet potatoes within a year of freezing.

References

- Andress, E., & Harrison, J. A. (2014). *So easy to preserve* (Bulletin 989). (6th ed.). University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.
- Jauron, R.(2002). *Harvesting and storing vegetables*. Iowa State University Extension.

Find out more about Michigan Fresh at canr.msu.edu/mi_fresh/.