



### What to do with your garden harvest

Do you have tomatoes, corn and zucchini taking over the counter and the refrigerator? All the fruits of your labor are now bountiful and wonderful, but what to do with it all?

Eating some of your fresh produce is enjoyable to a point. Try some of the following preservation techniques to save your garden produce to eat later.

**Freezing:** For the best quality, it is important to get your vegetables from the garden to the freezer as quickly as possible. The preserved vegetables will be great for your favorite soup, stew or chili. Frozen fruit is great in a fruit smoothie or as a topping on frozen yogurt.

**Dehydrating:** This process can be done in your oven, or for the best product, use a dehydrator. Dried fruits and vegetables make a tasty, nutritious snack.

**Canning:** From jams and salsa to pickled eggs, canning is making a comeback. However, remember to use a scientifically sound process to prevent food spoilage and deterioration. Using a pressure cooker is the safest. A hot water bath can also be used but can be less food safe.

“Canning interrupts the normal spoilage and decaying cycle of food by heating the food contained in a home canning jar that has been closed with a two-piece vacuum sealing cap.”(Ball Blue Book of Preserving, 2006)

It is recommended to take a course on food preservation to ensure proper procedures to eliminate the possibility of food borne illness. In addition, visit the Colorado State University Extension website for fact sheets to help safely guide you through your favorite home preservation techniques:

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/pubs.html#nutrition> .

Here is another idea that will incorporate many of the produce you harvest. Ratatouille—I have always wanted to know what that dish was. Now here are the basics. I am sure you can change it up to match your palate. This dish is usually served as a side dish but may also be served as a meal on its own (accompanied by pasta, rice or bread). Tomatoes are a key ingredient, with garlic, onions, zucchini, eggplant, bell peppers, marjoram and basil, or bay leaf and thyme.

### Ingredients:

—2 eggplants (1 1/2 pounds), cut into 1/2-inch cubes

—4 onions, chopped

—1/2 cup olive oil

—Coarse salt to taste

—4 yellow squash (1 1/2 pounds), cut into 1/2-inch cubes

—2 large red bell peppers, cut into 1/2-inch cubes

—8 plum tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped

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Written by Tracy Trumper

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—7 garlic cloves, minced

—1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme

—1 1/2 pounds penne rigate (with ridges)

—1/2 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

### Instructions:

Preheat oven to 450 F.

Stir together eggplants, onions, 1/4 cup oil and kosher salt in a large roasting pan, then roast mixture in middle of oven stirring occasionally, 15 minutes. Stir in squash, bell peppers, 2 tablespoons oil and more kosher salt to roast mixture, stirring occasionally, until bell peppers are tender, 25 to 30 minutes.

While vegetables are roasting, simmer tomatoes, garlic, thyme, remaining 2 tablespoons oil and kosher salt in a heavy saucepan, stirring occasionally, until thickened, 12-15 minutes. Stir tomatoes into roasted vegetables and season ratatouille.

Cook penne rigate in a 6-quart pot of boiling salted water until al dente and drain. While pasta is cooking, stir parsley and basil into ratatouille and season. Toss penne rigate with 1/3 of ratatouille and serve topped with remainder ratatouille.

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