

Farm To Fork

*Planning Beyond
the Harvest with
your Favorite
Veggies*

CRYSTAL MEDIATE

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Red Ridge Farm Creations
www.redridgefarm.org

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Dedication

First and foremost I would like to thank God for giving me the courage to step out of myself and see the needs of others.

I also want to thank my husband for always being beside me, not in front, not behind, but beside me. To my boys for pushing me to do things I never would have, for opening my eyes to the food we put on the table is not just what I eat but what you eat. That my job as a mother is to provide the best food I can. You let me see that others also need to have healthy options for their table and that's why all of you, God, my husband and my men have given me the courage to teach others.

To You, My Fellow Red Ridge Farm Growers, you may be just starting out on your growing journey of growing your own food and you may feel that it is impossible! But, I want you to know that you can do this, you're not alone, I'm here to help! To every woman of Christ that has followed her God-purpose of growing food for her family. To the woman who wants to be sure that the food on her family's plates is healthy, and growing her own is her solution. To the woman who dreams of the day that all the food on their family's plates is healthy and cooked by herself and her family.



Introduction

Introduction

Do You Have a Plan for Your Harvest??

That seems like an interesting question, doesn't it? But the answer is that many gardeners or even homesteaders don't. They spend days or even months planning for the growing and caring and either feel the harvest will take care of itself or they won't get much of a harvest so what is the point?

But the truth is that the harvest accounts for more than half of the work a homesteader or gardener does in a year! And without a plan, much of their harvest will go to waste!

Is this you?

I know it was me.

And that is why I want to share what I have learned with you.

Hello my name is Crystal Mediate, I am the owner of the Red Ridge Farm Homestead in Wyoming, USA. I am also the author of the Homesteader's Hands Blog, host of the Pray, Just Plant Podcast and creator of the Red Ridge Farm School of Growing!

Beginning in 2021, our mission at Red Ridge Farm Homestead has moved from just providing our family with as much homegrown food as possible to teaching others to do the same. To teach others how to gain their own food security and put homegrown food on every plate that we can. I want to help you grow! Grow a garden, a homestead, a healthy family, and grow closer to our Lord God.

I want to thank you for joining me here in the Planning Beyond the Harvest with Me eBook. You have done the work of growing your harvest and I can't wait to take you on a journey of not only picking, harvesting, preserving your harvest but also help you put your hard earned harvest on your family's plates to enjoy. You can do this!

Have a blessed day,

Crystal

P. S. If you would like to learn more about me or Red Ridge Farm Homestead then visit our website, www.redridgefarm.org or follow us on instagram @redridgefarmwyo





*Harvesting
Notes For
You*

"Let us fear the LORD our
God, who gives autumn
and spring rains in season,
who assures us of the
regular weeks of harvest."

~ Jeremiah 5:24



Planning Beyond the Harvest With -

Snow Peas



When Do I Harvest My Peas?

Picking your snow peas at their peak is your goal and that comes with knowing the perfect time to pick. Here is how:

- Snow Peas will be ready to harvest in approximately 55 to 70 days after sowing. You can find the exact days to maturity on the back of your seed packet.
- If you know your planting date you can easily find your estimated harvest date. For example: if you sowed your snow peas on April 15th then your estimated harvest date, with 55 days to harvest, would be June 9th.
- This is when you should begin observing your snow peas for signs of harvest.
- Snow pea pods should be immature and still flat - before peas in the pods begin to fill out.
- Harvest them every other day to keep pods from becoming large and starchy.
- Your pea's sweet taste will tell you when they are ready (I love eating them as an in the garden snack)
- Snow Peas are best grown in the late spring and/or Autumn when temps are around 60° to 70°. Peas do not take the heat!

How To Harvest Snow Peas

Once your peas are ready to harvest they are going to need to be picked in just the right way. Here is how:

- Harvest peas with two hands. One hand holds the vine and the other pinches the stem just above the seed pod and gives a slight tug. I like to use my thumb fingernail to slightly cut the stem when I pinch it.
- It is important you don't pull too vigorously as you may break the thin tendrils the plant uses for support.
- Snow peas are best picked in the morning when they will be crisp & crunchy for fresh eating. (You caught me! I love eating snow peas as I pick them)
- They should be cooled quickly to preserve their freshness and sweet taste. The sugar in snow peas, all peas really, quickly turns to bland starch after harvest unless cooled.
- Keep plants picked to increase your harvest.
- Also keep them well watered through your harvest period.

How To Preserve Your Snow Peas

Freezing is the best way to preserve your peas to last you through the winter. I personally don't blanch them. Here is how to best use snow peas:

- eat or store shortly after picking to preserve that sweet taste.
- trim ends off snow peas just before cooking and freezing.
- Store peas in the fridge if you plan to use them that evening. They will last about 5 to 7 Days in a sealed plastic bag
- to preserve for the winter: wash the trim peas, blanch for 2 minute, and place in a sealable freezer bag. Remove as much air as possible and seal. Label with name, date and place directly in the freezer. (Fill bags with however much your recipes on your menu plan need. I usually store 1 cup in each bag.)

How To Cook Frozen Snow Peas

- To cook a bag of frozen peas for a tasty side dish:
- bring a few cups of water to a boil. Enough to cover the amount of peas you will be cooking.
- Once water is at a rolling boil, carefully pour peas from the bag into the water.
- Stir them gently and let boil, uncovered, for about 2 to 5 minutes.
- Peas are done when they are warmed through and just slightly crunchy
- Drain water and enjoy!

My favorite way to use frozen snow peas is in my recipe Honey Snow Peas. This can be served on the side or you can add cubed beef or chicken to make a great stir fry; they can also be served on rice. Both recipes are included below.

Honey Snow Peas

Snow peas are sweet but the honey gives you that extra level of sweet kids love!

1 cup frozen snow peas

Half a cup water

1 tablespoon honey

Heat peas and water in a small Skillet pan over medium heat until they begin to boil for about 2 to 4 minutes. Add the honey, cook until melted and slightly caramelized. Eat immediately.

Honey Beef Teriyaki Stir Fry~

2 tablespoons honey
3 tablespoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 lb beef steak, cubed or
Into Thin strips
8 oz frozen peas defrosted
peas in a small bowl



Combine honey, soy sauce, garlic powder, and onion powder. Set aside. Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add steak and stir-fry for 2 minutes or until evenly Brown. Add the defrosted snow peas and stir-fry for another 3 minutes. Add the honey and soy sauce mixture, bring to a boil, stir constantly. Lower heat and simmer until honey is melted and slightly caramelized. Serve immediately.



Planning Beyond the Harvest With -

Kale



Kale and Why to Grow It

Kale is packed with vitamins and nutrients and is an amazing superfood that benefits your whole body! Kale is part of the brassica family and is very easy to grow. It is best sown in early spring or autumn, as the cool temperatures will bring out its sweet nutty taste. Kale grows best in very nitrogen rich soil and full sun.

List of How Kale Helps Your Whole Body

1. Kale has been known to help lower cholesterol.
2. Great source of vitamin k to strengthen your bones.
3. Rich in fiber and Magnesium to help those with diabetes.
4. Full of Omega 3 Fatty Acids and antioxidant sulforaphane, which helps with inflammation.
5. Good source of Potassium that can help detox the body.
6. It is also a hunger depressant because it contains thylakoids, a natural remedy for reducing insulin and ghrelin our hunger hormone.

When Do I Harvest My Kale?

Picking your Kale leaves at their peak is your goal and that comes with knowing the perfect time to pick.

Here is how:

- Kale will be ready to harvest in approximately 30 days after sowing. You can find the exact days to maturity on the back of your seed packet.
 - If you know your planting date you can easily find your estimated harvest date. For example: if you sowed your kale on April 15th then your estimated harvest date, with 30 days to harvest, would be May 15th.
 - This is when you should begin observing your kale for signs of harvest.
 - Kale should be picked continuously starting from the outer leaves.
 - Harvest them when leaves are about the size of your laid out hand.
 - Kale leaf size will tell you when they are ready
- Snow Peas are best grown in the late spring and/or Autumn when temps are around 60° to 70°.

How To Harvest Kale

Once your kale is ready to harvest they are going to need to be picked in just the right way. Here is how:

- Harvest kale with a serrated knife. Cut outer leaves from the base of the plant one leaf at a time. (Discard any yellow or torn leaves)
- It is important you don't cut the terminal bud or center of the plant or you will stop production.
- Kale is best picked in the morning when it will be crisp & crunchy for fresh eating.
- They should be cooled quickly to preserve their freshness and sweet taste. The sugar in kale, quickly turns to bland starch after harvest unless cooled.
- Keep plants picked to increase your harvest.
- Also keep them well watered through your harvest period.
- Kale will actually improve it's taste after a light frost.
- You can extend it's harvest by using frost cloth in the late autumn.

How To Preserve Your Kale

Freezing is the best way to preserve your kale to last you through the winter. I personally don't blanch it. Here is how to best use kale:

- eat or store shortly after picking to preserve that sweet taste.

- trim thick stock out of leaves as they can be bitter.
- Store kale in the fridge if you plan to use that evening. They will last about 5 to 7 Days in a sealed plastic bag
- to preserve for the winter by freezing: wash and trim thick stems, blanch for 2 minute, and place in a sealable freezer bag. Remove as much air as possible and seal. Label with name, date and place directly in the freezer. (Fill bags with however much your recipes on your menu plan need. I usually store 1 cup in each bag.)
- To preserve for the winter using canning: Yes, you can pressure can greens of all shapes and sizes. I recommend following your canning instructions to the T, especially with pressure canning.

How To Cook Fresh Kale:

If you want the full benefits of fresh kale the small tender leaves can be used in any tossed salad!

To cook kale for a tasty side dish:

- bring a few cups of water to a boil. Enough to cover the amount of kale you will be cooking.
- Once water is at a rolling boil, carefully place kale into the water.
- Stir gently and let boil, uncovered, for about 10 to 15 minutes.
- Kale is done when stems are tender!
- Drain water and enjoy!

Or Saute'

- In a large skillet over medium heat, heat 2 tsp Olive Oil or leftover Bacon Grease.
- Add two cloves chopped garlic and heat until fragrant, 1 minute.
- Add three cups chopped and destocked kale and cook stirring often until Kale is wilted.
- Serve Warm

Kale Chips ~

My favorite way to use fresh Kale is in my recipe Salt and Pepper Kale Chips. This makes a great afternoon snack!

1 bunch Kale (about a 8 leaves)

Olive Oil to Coat

Salt and Pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 300. Wash Leaves and trim the meat of the leaf from the tough stem. Place in a large bowl. Coat leaves with Olive Oil. Lay leave out on a baking sheet and season with salt and pepper. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes then rotate the tray and check every 2-5 minutes as Kale can burn easily. Kale can be stored in sealed bags like regular chips. Enjoy!

How to Use Frozen Kale

Frozen Kale is very versatile and because it is already slightly cooked you can just defrost and add to any of your favorite kale recipes. Here are a few ideas.

- Smoothies
- Soups, Chilies, or Stews
- Substitute Snow Peas in My Cheese Tortellini Recipe (my exclusive recipe to those who receive my newsletter)
- Saute in the recipe above
- Add to scrambled eggs or quiche
- Or top your vegetarian pizza

How to Use Canned Kale

You can use canned Kale in the same way as frozen but because it is cooked, it's ready off the shelf, it just needs to be warmed.

It is easy to add Kale to this traditional English Dish. But first why would a family from Wyoming like Bangers and Mash?

It is because we are huge fans of the Book and British Tv Series, *All Creature Great and Small* by James Harriot. We have listened to all the books at least 3 times and watched the tv series, hmm, I lost count.

Kale Bangers and Mash ~

10 bangers, or Johnsonville brats

3 Lbs white potatoes, peeled and diced

1 pint canned Kale, drained

½ medium onion, in thin slices

3 cups beef or pork broth

⅓ cup flour

¼ cup butter

4 teaspoons Olive oil



Place diced potatoes in a medium pot, fill with water until potatoes are just covered. Bring to a boil and cook for 10 minutes or until potatoes are tender. When done, drain, add butter, and mash. Set aside to keep warm. Meanwhile, cook Johnsonville brats according to instructions on the back in a medium saucepan. Remove brats from the pan and set to the side under foil to keep warm. In the same pan, heat your olive oil. Add garlic and onions. Cook until onions are transparent. Add the flour to the pan and stir until all the onion and garlic are covered. Slowly add in your broth. Bring to boil and cook until broth begins to thicken. Add the drained kale, cook until gravy thickens and kale is warmed through. When all three parts are finished, serve. Spoon mashed potatoes in the center of the plate making a well in the potatoes, pour over a serving of gravy and top with a banger. Serves 5 (including 3 growing men!)



Planning Beyond the Harvest With -

Tomatoes



When Are My Tomatoes Ready To Pick?

I think the meaning of readiness in tomatoes is a very individual decision for gardeners and the varieties you may be growing, as not all will turn red! Tomato Dirt's Website says there are four unique ways to tell if your tomato is ripe.

Uniform Color

This does not mean all of your tomatoes on your plant need to be a uniform color but instead that the individual tomato is a uniform color whatever it is pink, purple, yellow, orange, and red starting from the blossom into the stem. It is so tempting to pick your Tomatoes when they still have green shoulders but even though it will continue to ripen after picking, the flavor development will stop.

Touch

The only way you will teach your fingers to recognize that perfect readiness touch is to fondle lots of tomatoes and to fondle them daily. Then you will be able to feel that little give that signifies a ripe tomato!

Vine Readiness

Another sign of readiness is how easily your tomato is to pick. Most ripe tomatoes, except the extra large ones, should pull easily from the vine! If you tug and nothing happens give it a few more days. (You pick tomatoes by gently tugging with just a little twist)

Taste

When a tomato is allowed to stay on the vine until completely ready the flavor will be at its peak. This can only be tested by tasting your tomatoes and judging whether or not you should have picked earlier or later. (I would fail here, I'm glad I can still tell from the other three ways.)

Lastly, it is going to be important if the tomato you are harvesting is an indeterminate or determinate tomato. Each is going to ripen differently.

Independent tomatoes ripen individually or in clusters but not all at the same time. Which makes them perfect for all summer eating and using in the below recipes, when you only have a few.

Determinate tomatoes are going to ripen all at once. This is going to give a high-yield, which is great for when you are home processing.

How To Store Fresh Tomatoes

I'm sure with the following recipes you'll be eating your tomatoes faster than your plant can produce. But, just in case you are saving a few to eat later here are some tips on storing them.

- Don't put them in the fridge. Tomatoes don't do well in the cold.
- Don't remove the stems
- Lay them on a flat surface like your counter
- Keep out of the sun
- Lay them stock down; this will stop moisture from escaping from your fresh tomato

Fresh Tomato Recipes

The most common way I found fresh tomatoes to be used was sliced with a little salt and pepper!

- Turn tomato on their side
- Slice thinly with a sharp serrated knife
- Lay in a single layer on a plate
- Sprinkle salt and pepper to taste

The next two recipes are how my sister likes them best!

Tomato sandwich

- Thickly sliced tomatoes (as many as you can fit)
- Mayo
- Your favorite sandwich bread
- Lettuce

I think you could add bacon to this for an amazing BLT

Bruschetta ~

This is my sister's favorite. I think her recipe is unique as it includes mozzarella cheese. This recipe can easily be altered to suit personal taste or the amount of ingredients on hand!

French bread, baguette, or
toasted pita

3 to 4 diced tomatoes

½ cup julienned basil

1 to 2 teaspoons olive oil

1 cup diced mozzarella

Salt to taste



Toss all ingredients together (except the bread) in a bowl. Cut the French bread in half. Spoon tomato mixture on top of cut bread and enjoy!

How To Freeze Tomatoes?

Freezing tomatoes is a great way to keep your tomatoes fresh until you're ready to can them or to process them. I usually do this as my tomatoes start to slowly ripen because when I can I like huge batches. Why make five or six batches when you can make one huge one. Remember that saying, "go big or go home"? Yep, that's me! Plus freezing your tomatoes first before canning can also cut down on simmering time as well as make them easier to peel.

Freezing whole tomatoes

- Wash Tomatoes
- Remove stems
- Place tomatoes in a single layer on a baking sheet
- Place in freezer for 1-3 hours
- Remove and pack into freezer containers then seal
- Label and return to freezer

How to Can Whole tomatoes?

When canning and preserving tomatoes you need to select firm tomatoes that are free of cracks, spots, and blemishes. Tomatoes are classified as a high acid food so water bathing will be your go-to process.

Water bathing is when full sealed jars are placed in a pot of boiling water, where the water covers the jars by 1 inch. The jars and produce is then boiled for a set

time to cook the produce and seal the jars.

I told you all, when it comes to canning I am not an expert and I am one who follows my Ball book to the letter. What I put into the recipes is, of course, my choice but for the canning process I follow very closely and you should follow it too. It is the difference between spoiled food, salmonella poisoning and enjoying fresh home-grown sweet tasting tomatoes in the middle of winter.

It's important for you to read your recipes carefully and gather all your equipment before you begin.

- Jars; make sure you examine them for cracks or any nicks on the lid's rings
 - Wash all of your equipment
 - Fill the water bath with water and place on the stove to simmer
 - Place the rack in the elevated position
 - Cover with a lid
- .

Salsa

This recipe will make about 6 pints of salsa

6 lb of tomatoes (usually
about 12 large tomatoes)
3 cups diced red onion or
onion
1 1/2 cups chopped cilantro
15 cloves garlic
6 jalapeno peppers seeded
and diced
1 tablespoon salt
3/4 teaspoon dried red
chili flakes
3/4 cup vinegar

Wash tomatoes, drain, peel and quarter. Combine all ingredients in a large sauce pot to boil, reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes or until mixture thickens. Ladle hot salsa into hot jars leaving a quarter inch headspace, adjust two-piece caps, process 15 minutes in boiling water bath canner (Note: remember when you're cutting up those jalapenos to wear gloves)

How do you use frozen tomatoes?

Frozen tomatoes can be used in many recipes just thaw and cook.

Pasta Sauce ~

Pasta sauce makes 14 pints or 7 quarts

45 lb of tomatoes

6 cups chopped onions

12 cloves garlic minced

½ cup of olive oil

2 tablespoons oregano

6 Bay leaves

¼ cup sugar

¼ cup salt

Pull tomatoes from the freezer and let thaw for at least 12 hours. Pour any water or juice that forms in your bag off. This will reduce your simmer time! Peel tomatoes. This can be done by gently squeezing small tomatoes from the blossom end and pushing up towards the stem parts that have been cut away. With bigger tomatoes you may need to use a paring knife to cut and pull the skin but no blanching is going to be required. Saute onions, garlic and olive oil in a large sauce pot. Add tomatoes, oregano, bay leaves, and sugar. Stir in salt and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove bay leaves. Puree the tomatoes using a food processor or food mill. Cook pulp in a large uncovered saucepan over medium-high heat until sauce thickens.

Stir to prevent sticking. Reduce volume by 1/2 or just depends on how thick you want it. Ladle hot sauce into hot jars leaving half-inch headspace. Adjust two-piece caps. Process pints for 35 minutes quarts for 40 minutes in a boiling water bath canner.

Tomato Paste ~

12 lb of tomatoes (thaw longer than above recipe about 24 hours)
1 teaspoon salt
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of olive oil



Drain off all of the juice and kind of squeeze the tomatoes a little bit to get out as much of the juice as you can. Squeeze the actual tomato as stated above to peel. Puree pulp, olive oil, and salt in a food processor. Pour into unreactive rimmed cooking sheets. Place in a 300-degree oven and bake for 3 hours. Check and stir frequently. Once the sauce has been reduced by half let cool. Pour sauce into ice cube trays and freeze for about an hour and or until set. Pull from trays and place in a freezer bag and seal. Return to the freezer. Use each cube is about one tablespoon of paste and use as needed in recipes.

The Lord will indeed give
what is good,
and our land will yield
its harvest.

- Psalm 85:12



*Planning Beyond the
Harvest With -
Sweet Peppers*



Sweet Bell Peppers come in a variety of colors but all have that characteristic bell shape. The green and purple peppers are going to be more on the tart side where the red, yellow, and orange are more sweet. They are packed with Vitamin K, B, C, and A. They also have a high water content that will add moisture to any recipe.

When Do I Harvest My Sweet Bell Peppers?

Picking your peppers at their peak is your goal and that comes with knowing the perfect time to pick. Here is how:

- Peppers should be harvested once they are the desired size and color
- Leaving them on for longer will make them sweeter
- Remember ripeness and finish color will depend on the variety you have chosen
- If you are planting more than one variety be sure to label them properly as almost all Bell Peppers will be green to begin with.

How To Harvest Bell Peppers

Once your Bell Peppers are ready to harvest they are going to need to be picked in just the right way. Here is how:

- You can use a knife or shears to cut the pepper from the plant. This will protect your plant from stress that can occur when the peppers are ripped from the plant.

How to Store Bell Peppers

For fresh eating Bell Peppers should be properly stored to keep that great sweet taste. Here is how:

- Place them in the veggie drawer of your fridge. Plan to use them in the next 10 days or they will spoil or lose flavor.

How To Preserve Your Bell Peppers

Freezing is the best way to preserve your bell peppers to last you through the winter. I personally don't blanch them. Here is how with a few other ideas:

- to preserve in the freezer: wash the pepper, core, and chop into small pieces(for omelets or to use in soups or chili) or slice into thin strips (for fajitas). Place in a sealable freezer bag. Remove as much air

- as possible and seal. Label with name, date and place directly in the freezer. (Fill bags with however much your recipes on your menu plan need. I usually store 1 cup in each bag.)
- To dry: wash the pepper, core, and chop into small pieces. Place in your dehydrator until all the moisture has been removed. (about 8 hrs) Place in a sealable freezer bag. Remove as much air as possible and seal. Label with name, date and place directly in your cupboard or spice rack in a small jar.
- Also your dried peppers can be ground to make pepper powder.

How To Cook Frozen Bell Peppers

To cook you can just sprinkle your desired amount into your favorite recipes:

- I love adding a few to my morning scrambled eggs
- Or my stew and chili
- For fajitas just add frozen bell pepper strips to your pan once the meat is medium rare. Then both can finish cooking together.
- For my Slow Cooker Fajitas just place frozen peppers in a crock pot with all the other ingredients.

How to Use Dehydrated Bell Peppers

- You can easily just add them to any liquid recipe, like stew and chili, no problem.
- But if you want to use them in any other recipes they need to be reconstituted first in some hot boiling water for about 5 minutes.

Homestead Breakfast Bake ~

My favorite way to use frozen bell peppers is in my recipe Homestead Breakfast Bake. This recipe can be made the morning of or mixed together the night before and baked the next morning.

45 lb of tomatoes
6 cups chopped onions
12 cloves garlic minced
½ cup of olive oil
2 tablespoons oregano
6 Bay leaves
¼ cup sugar
¼ cup salt



Preheat your oven 375. Using a 10" Cast Iron Skillet melt a tablespoon of lard on medium heat on your stove top. Once heated add your onion, peppers, and sausage. Cook until everything is cooked through. Pour into a bowl and set aside. Add more lard to the pan, once melted add your shredded potatoes fry into hashbrowns. If your hashbrowns begins to stick to the skillet add more lard. They don't need to be crispy but

if that is what you like then go for it. Once potatoes are done remove the pan from the heat. Remove half of the hashbrowns and set aside. Spread remaining potatoes to make an even layer on the bottom of the pan. Continue by layering $\frac{1}{2}$ of the sausage mixture, then cheese, then the rest of the potatoes, then the rest of the sausage mixture, and lastly the rest of the cheese.

Now it is time to make a milk and egg mixture. Place the eggs and milk in a medium bowl with a dash of salt and pepper. Whisk. Pour mixture evenly over the layered sausage, cheese, and potatoes.

Carefully place the filled cast iron pan in the oven and bake for 30 to 40 minute. Everything but the eggs are cooked so your Bake is finished when the eggs are cooked through.

Enjoy Warm. My boy likes to add a little ketchup to their slice where my husband likes to cover his with homemade salsa.



*Planning Beyond the
Harvest With -*

Potatoes



History of the Potato

Did you know that potatoes contain most of the vitamins needed for sustenance and that one acre of potatoes can sustain 10 people for a year?

And, did you know that the potato coming to Europe would help end famine?

The Europe before the potato was one of constant famine. Population growth or decline actually all depends on that year's grain harvest. A country's strength and wealth was dependent on those same harvests as well. The Mediterranean Sea helped the countries on its border by providing more constant weather and therefore a more constant food supply. But, the northern countries did not have this luxury until the potato and a few other foods from the Americas arrived. The potato was brought to Spain by the Conquistadors in 1536.

Because the people of the Andes spent 100's of years cultivating more than 3000 different varieties of potatoes, Europe had finally found a crop that would grow in every environment they had. From the freezing grounds in the north to the dry lands along the Mediterranean Sea. They found a miracle plant!

The potato, unlike the commonly grown wheat of the times, could produce more calories per acre. Thus, it took less people to grow enough potatoes to feed the population of Europe! And with a more stable food supply the populations wouldn't need to worry about famine!

Plus the potatoes were not as restricting as growing grain. The grain size and amount are limited by the plant but the potato not needing extra support for its fruit could just grow and grow. Oh, and storing the seed potatoes for next year's crop is so much easier than that of grain. And, I am sure you all know how easy they are to serve for dinner. Where grain would need to be cut, dried, threshed, winnowed (removing the chaff) and then finally taken to a mill to be turned into flour.

Also, did you know that the potato was used to fuel the armies of Europe?

Because the potato was so easy to grow and store and had a higher calorie count than other commonly

grown grains of the time. The population of large countries could grow and develop without the fear of famine more quickly. This allowed those said countries to have the manpower to travel and conquer smaller countries of the times.

In fact, the armies of Napoleon, Hitler, Russia and Great Britain were all fueled by potatoes!

It is hard to believe what this one little discovery did to change the landscape of Europe!

This is also how the potato was brought to North America. Again because of easy storability it came across from Europe to the Colonies of America. In fact the potato is famed for feeding the pilgrims.

Potato Types:

Russet

Thick Skin with light and fluffy center. Best used for; Baked Potatoes, Pan Fried, Mashed and French Fries

Red

Thin skin and stay firm through cooking. Best used for; Baked Potatoes, Salads, Soups, Grilled, and Steamed.

Yellow

Buttery flavor with a creamy texture. Best used for; Baked Potato, Mashed, Salad, Soup, and Grilled

White

Thin skin with nutty flavor and stays firm throughout cooking. Best used for; Pan Fried, Salads, Soups, French Fries, and Steamed

Purple

Medium skin with an earthy flavor and vibrant color. Best used for; Baked Potatoes, Salad, Steamed, and Microwave

Fingerlings

Nutty and buttery flavor with a firm texture. Best used for; Baked Potatoes, Pan Fried, Steamed, and Microwaved

Petite

Similar to their larger cousins but a more concentrated taste. Best used for; Baked Potatoes, Pan Fried, Steamed, and Microwaved

Harvesting Potatoes

When?

Surprisingly, once the potato plant flowers there are potatoes under the soil that can be harvested. This happens with most varieties around the 4 to 6 week mark. Now if you decide to harvest your potatoes then you will only find small 1 in to 1/2 inch sized potatoes. These are usually called new potatoes in the grocery store and are great if you just can't wait until your potatoes have fully matured.

I, myself, love new potatoes so I will usually harvest one or two plants at this time just for that reason. In fact, next year, I plan on planting just one bed of potatoes for this reason.

Now to get the huge fully mature potatoes you are going to have to wait. Most varieties of potatoes mature at 90 days and some can even go to 120 day and longer.

The plant itself will tell you when the best time is for harvesting. The plant tips will begin to yellow and the whole plant may start to fall over. This is an indication that harvest time is getting close. When the plant falls completely over and some of the plants begin to wither and die it is the perfect time for your potato harvest.

Now I know life in the garden can get a little hectic around harvest season, so if you happen to miss this perfect window you will need to at least get your potatoes harvested before the plant completely dies back. Leaving them in the ground too long can lead to more possibility of scabbing (a potato disease) or the potatoes may even resprout!



How?

Harvesting potatoes is very simple. You'll want to use a spud fork and to keep from stabbing your potatoes you place it 8 to 10 inches from the base of the plant. It helps to have two people, one person using the spud fork to lift and loosen the soil and the other pulling the plant up at the same time.

Sometimes the weather will tell you the exact time you will have to harvest!

Preserving Potatoes

The first step in preserving potatoes is curing! This is a very simple process, it just has a couple guidelines that are very important!

Step 1- find a place that is elevated and out of any light of any kind. Light will cause your potatoes to turn green. You can still eat slightly green potatoes but the more green they turn the taste will be destroyed as well as become slightly poisonous.

Step 2- place potatoes in one layer on a rack or piece of cardboard. Just make sure it is not on the ground.

Step 3- let them sit in this spot for up to 7 days; at most 10 days. It is also best at the midway mark to go in and turn the potatoes if the rack you chose to put them on does not let air circulate all around them.

Curing allows for the skins to toughen up and any wounds from digging to heal. This is very important for long storage. The number one enemy to storing food is moisture!

Step 4- This may seem a little tedious but this the most important part. You are going to need to inspect every single potato. You are going to be looking for bruises, wounds that didn't heal, soft spots, and anything that makes the potato susceptible to rot. These potatoes need to be set aside to be used up quickly.

Step 5- As you have your hands on your potatoes you should sort them by size. This makes preparing dinner a little easier as every size will be better suited for different recipes. It has also been found that smaller potatoes don't seem to store as well as the larger ones. One rotten potato can cause all your potatoes to rot very quickly. It is so important that you sort your potatoes. You just have to get your hands on every potato!

Now it is time to store your potatoes!

Storing potatoes is going to need certain conditions to be able to last you all winter. It is always better to run out of potatoes before they all rot on you.

The Proper Conditions

- As low of a temperature as you can; between 42 to 50 degrees
- 42 to 45 degrees will keep them great for boiling and other recipes
- But if you want your potatoes more for french fries and chips then you can be closer to 47 to 50 degrees. This will stop the sugars from converting too much and thus give you a whiter french fry. You will potentially have more sprouting of eyes at these temperatures.
- Store in a breathable container to allow for proper air circulation around the potatoes.
- Dark to avoid greening. Like I said above when your potatoes turn green this can cause them to taste bitter and if too green become hard to digest!
- Lastly, do not store with other produce like Apples and Pears as they let off Ethylene gas that can cause your potatoes to taste bad and rot quicker.

This year I discovered a new way to store potatoes. Now, I guess this is not a new way but more of a new way to me. That is pressure canning them. I am not an expert at canning so my best advice is to follow the steps from your Ball Jar's Recipe Book to the letter.

I canned my potatoes two ways. One was where my boys and I peeled about 30 lbs of potatoes and cut them into bite size pieces to be used for future mashed potatoes and soups. Way two, was the really small potatoes. I canned any potatoes that were too small to save for next year's seed potatoes. I use these for quick and easy new potatoes.

Using Canned Peeled Potatoes

Using these precut, peeled and cooked potatoes made weeknight dinner so easy!

- Can be used in soup by just pouring directly from the jar
- Can be used for mashed potatoes by pouring into a large pot, bring to a boil, drained, and mashed!

Using Canned New Potatoes

I loved using these potatoes. It can usually take up to an hour to make new potatoes recipes depending on the size of the potatoes. But, because they are precooked, they only need to be warmed in the oven. Which only takes 10 minutes.

- Drain potatoes!
- Pour drained potatoes into a shallow baking dish
- Cut up about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of butter in two small chunks and place on top of potatoes.

- Sprinkle with the seasoning you like to place on new potatoes. I like onion powder, parsley, and garlic powder personally.
- Next back in a 350 degree oven for about 10 minutes or until butter is melted and potatoes are warmed through!
- Enjoy! They are just so good!

Cheeseburger Potato Soup ~

This was a new recipe that I developed last month when I found we needed to find a few new recipes for using up all the hamburger that comes from either butchering a whole beef or purchasing one. Over the years we have done both.

1 lb of ground beef, or any ground meat really

4 medium potatoes, peeled and chopped into bite size pieces

1 small onion, peeled and diced

3 carrots, peeled and sliced

½ cup butter

1 quart Beef Broth

1 tsp garlic powder

1 cup shredded cheese



Place burger and onions in a large soup pot and fry on medium heat. Once the onions and burger are cooked, add butter, carrots, potatoes, garlic powder, and broth.

Bring to a boil and cook until all the veggies are done. This is when stabbing with a fork the fork slides in easily. Add the cheese and let melt. Pull off of the heat and serve warm. I like to use dried or fresh chives as a garnish!



Planning Beyond the Harvest With -

Broccoli



Benefits of Growing Broccoli

Broccoli has always been looked at as a very important part of healthy eating. I know I was always told it was good for me. But what I have found out about the benefits of eating broccoli makes that a complete understatement. Yes, broccoli is good for you but it could be said that broccoli is a nutrition wonder, a superfood!

And on top of that broccoli is part of the brassica family and is very easy to grow. It is best started in late winter indoors and grown until mid-spring when it can be transplanted into your garden as the cool weather gives it a sweeter taste. Broccoli loves rich soil.

How Broccoli Helps Your Whole Body

- Very High in Vitamin C and can help you battle the common cold
- High amounts of potassium help maintain a healthy nervous system and brain function

- Contains magnesium and calcium which can help lower blood pressure
- The calcium and vitamin K can also help promote bone growth and prevent osteoporosis
- It is also helpful in repairing skin damage because of its glucoraphanin that helps skin detoxify and repair.
- Boosts your immune system with its large amount of beta-carotene.
- High in fiber to help regulate blood sugars and can give a feeling of being full because of its high protein count compared to its calorie count
- The folate in broccoli can help reduce heart disease and heart attacks
- Helps improve your eyesight
- Can prevent cancer

When Do I Harvest My Broccoli

Knowing when to harvest broccoli can be a bit tricky. But here are a few guidelines you can follow so you harvest your broccoli at the perfect time.

First look to see if the head of the broccoli has formed and is it still firm and tight. Next measure the head. The head should measure between 4 to 7 inches, but don't go on size alone. Size can be an indicator but you should also look at the size of the individual florets.

When they get to the size of a match head then your broccoli is ready to harvest! You will also need to watch the color of the florets you want to harvest when they are a deep green but if you see them turning yellow before any of the above guidelines then harvest right away, as this is a sign that the broccoli is about to bolt. And you want to harvest before your broccoli does this.

Another part of knowing when you should harvest is knowing your estimated harvest dates. You can easily find the days to harvest days on the back of your seed packet and add that number to the date that your broccoli germinated to get the estimated harvest date.

To learn more about making a garden plan that can help you plan for the harvest you can grab the "Your Harvest Planner"

How To Harvest Your Broccoli

To harvest your broccoli you will need a bowl or basket and a sharp knife. You are going to use a sharp knife to cut the broccoli head off of the plant. You will want to cut at about 5 inches or so below the head and cut with a smooth stroke. Try to avoid sawing too much as this can cause damage to the stem and prevent side shoots from maturing.

Broccoli will develop side shoots that may be smaller than the main head but are still delicious and packed full of benefits. These will grow like tiny heads to the side of where the main head was. By looking at the size of the florets, you can tell when these side shoots are ready for harvest. Simply cut them off as they become ready.

I also enjoy harvesting the leaves when the plant is done producing heads. I used to just feed them to my chickens but I have found them to taste somewhat like collard greens and are a great way to bring the whole plant to our table.

How To Preserve Your Broccoli

Broccoli can be preserved and eaten in quite a few different ways. I will show them all below along with a few favorite recipes we like to use here at Red Ridge Farm.



How to Store and Cook Fresh Broccoli

Properly stored broccoli will last between 2 to 5 days as a head but broccoli that has been cut up may only last a day. You may think that broccoli would do best in a plastic bag but that is the farthest from the truth. Here are two proper ways to store fresh broccoli in your fridge:

- Paper Towel Method- wrap your broccoli heads in a damp paper towel. This provides a moist but not too moist environment. Do avoid washing your broccoli until you intend to use it. Because too much moisture locked in among the florets will cause mold to grow.
- Bouquet Method- this is where you treat your broccoli like a fresh bouquet of flowers. Place the stem ends of the broccoli heads in a cup or bowl of water until the tips are fully submerged. Be sure to change the water daily.
- Before cooking you will need to wash broccoli very thoroughly. To help remove any insects it is best to soak broccoli heads in a saltwater brine for 30 minutes. The brine should have a ratio of 1 cup of salt to a gallon of water. Drain and rinse with water to finish the job.

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Garlic Roasted Broccoli ~

This recipe is a quick way to get broccoli on your dinner table and it is delicious to boot!

- 2 heads of broccoli
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp sea salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Cut up the broccoli heads into bite-size florets and place them in a bowl. Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with salt, pepper, and garlic. Toss together. Spread coated broccoli onto a baking dish in an even layer.

Place the baking dish with broccoli into the 400-degree oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until broccoli is fork-tender. To give this dish a little zest you could squeeze half a lemon or orange and drizzle over broccoli just before serving!

How To Store and Cook Frozen Broccoli

Now if you would like to store broccoli for a little longer, there are two ways. The first being freezing. To freeze Broccoli you must:

- Select tender firm broccoli stalks with firm heads that are washed and any woody portions removed

- Wash by using the method above and cut into manageable sizes. Think about how will plan to use this broccoli in your favorite recipes and cut accordingly.
- Blanch medium portions for 3 minutes and large portions for 4 minutes.
- Drain and let Cool
- Pack into freezer jars or plastic bags. Be sure to remove as much air as possible to prevent freezer burn.
- Label and freeze
- They will last if sealed correctly up to 12 months in your freezer

Cheesy Broccoli Casserole ~

This recipe can be used as a vegetarian main course or can be a great side dish for a large family gathering!

4 cups of frozen broccoli,
thawed and drained
1 package of cream cheese,
room temp and cubed
¼ cup sour cream
1 ½ cup shredded Cheddar
Cheese
1 tsp dried minced garlic
½ tsp onion powder
½ tsp parsley
½ tsp oregano flakes
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease with butter a 3-quart baking dish lay thawed broccoli in a dish in an even layer and set the baking dish aside for later. Mix the cream cheese, sour cream, cheese, and seasonings in a mixing bowl with a whisk until well combined. Add mixture to your broccoli in the baking dish and mix. Bake for 17 to 20 minutes until broccoli is tender and the top is golden brown. Remove and let stand for 5 minutes before serving. Enjoy!

How To Cook Canned Broccoli

The second long-term storage for broccoli is pressure canning. I want to say again it is important to follow your canning books instructions because they know what they are talking about. The below instructions are from my Ball Blue Book! To pressure can broccoli you must:

- Remove any large stems or leaves. Wash as instructed above in a brine. Rinse thoroughly
- Cut into pieces that will fit in your jar and blanch for 4 minutes
- Pack into your clean jars and top with 1 teaspoon salt for quart jars and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt for pint jars
- Fill the jar with blanching water to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the top of the jar
- Seal with the lid and band
- Process in a pressure canner: Quarts 40 minutes and Pints 25 in 10 lbs of pressure or follow the instruction that came with your pressure canner.

Cast Iron Creamy Bacon Broccoli ~

This recipe is great as a side dish or a keto meal. There is nothing like broccoli cooked in a creamy garlic sauce topped with homemade cheese and bacon! If you can't find the cheese in this recipe you can easily replace it with parmesan or manchego cheese. But my favorite cheese to use in this recipe is a cheese that one of our local producers makes with her fresh sheep's milk. I would say it tastes like bacon cheese!

½ cup raw bacon, diced
1 Tbsp butter
3 clove garlic, minced
2 pints or 1 quart canned
broccoli, drained
1 cup heavy cream
¾ cup shredded Smocheho



Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. In a medium cast-iron skillet, over medium heat cook the bacon until slightly crispy. When done, remove from the skillet and set aside. Add the butter, garlic, and broccoli to the hot pan and brown slightly. Add the heavy cream, cheese, and bacon and place the whole skillet in the oven, and bake for 10 minutes or until the cheese is melted and bubbly. Remove from the oven and let rest for 5 minutes before serving. Enjoy!

Planning for Beyond the
Harvest will get you that
Summer taste in January
~ Crystal Mediate



*Planning Beyond the
Harvest With -
Cauliflower*



The benefits of eating cauliflower are endless. But a few would be that it can help fight cancer, reduce inflammation, help with digestion, and aid heart health! Its levels of B9 or folate can help with pregnancy health and increase a woman's fertility when trying to conceive. It can help with weight loss as it is very low in calories but is packed with nutrition.

It is best grown in rich soil and started in late winter indoors and grown until mid-spring when it can be transplanted into your garden as the cool weather gives it a sweeter taste.

When Do I Harvest Your Cauliflower

Cauliflower flowers are ready to harvest when they reach 6 to 9 inches in diameter and the blooms are still compact and firm. Size is less of a determining factor because you should harvest quickly if the bloom begins to loosen no matter the head size. If the head has a coarse texture the plant is over mature. If this happens be sure to just consume fresh as the head may not preserve well.

Another factor in harvesting or preparing your cauliflower for harvesting is blanching. This is when you fold the leaves of the cauliflower plant back over the flower head so that it is blocked from the sun. This helps keep the head that beautiful white color. This is done two to three weeks before harvesting or when the head is about 3 inches in diameter.

Another part of knowing when you should harvest is knowing your estimated harvest dates. You can easily find the days to harvest days on the back of your seed packet and add that number to the date that your cauliflower germinated to get the estimated harvest date.

Grab the "Your Harvest Planner to help you write all of your dates in one place! You can find it at www.redridgefarm.org/shop

How To Harvest Your Cauliflower

To harvest your cauliflower you will need a bowl or basket and a sharp knife. Using a knife, cut the stem of the head about 2 inches from the base of the head. This will cut the head free from the plant. Most cauliflowers will not regrow. But I have found that leaves can be pruned at the stock and used in recipes that call for

cabbage leaves or collard greens.

How To Preserve and Store Your Cauliflower

Cauliflower can be preserved and eaten in quite a few different ways. I will show them all below along with a few favorite recipes we like to use here at Red Ridge Farm.

I do have a disclaimer when it comes to preserving food. You should follow your canning books guidelines to the letter as these methods have been used for hundreds of years and they know what they are doing. I in fact will be sharing the instructions I follow out of my Ball Canning Book. And I suggest you do the same or find another reputable source.

How to Store and Cook Fresh Cauliflower

Properly stored cauliflower will last between 2 to 5 days as a head but cauliflower that has been cut up may only last a day. You may think that cauliflower would do best in a plastic bag but that is the farthest from the truth. Here are two proper ways to store fresh cauliflower in your fridge:

- Paper Towel Method- wrap your cauliflower heads in a damp paper towel. This provides a moist but not too moist environment. Do avoid washing your cauliflower until you intend to use it. Because too

- much moisture locked in among the florets will cause mold to grow.
- Bouquet Method- this is where you treat your cauliflower like a fresh bouquet of flowers. Place the stem ends of the cauliflower heads in a cup or bowl of water until the tips are fully submerged. Be sure to change the water daily.
- Before cooking you will need to wash cauliflower very thoroughly. To help remove any insects it is best to soak cauliflower heads in a saltwater brine for 30 minutes. The brine should have a ratio of 1 cup of salt to a gallon of water. Drain and rinse with water to finish the job.

Roasted Cauliflower~

Cauliflower is great roasted. As it can be flavored in many different ways I am just going to share the basic recipe for roasting cauliflower below. And you use what herbs and seasonings you enjoy. I have made both Italian and Mexican roasted cauliflower, it just depends on your seasonings!

One head of Cauliflower

Olive Oil

Salt and Pepper

Cut the head of cauliflower into bite-size pieces. Be sure to cut leaving lots of flat edges as this will help the

florets make contact with the pan to get a more even cook! Next spread your cut-up cauliflower florets onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Be sure to give the florets lots of space to give them room to release steam without overcooking their neighbor. Sprinkle with olive oil over the florets coating them. Place the pans in a 425-degree oven for 25 to 30 minutes. Be sure to flip the florets over at 15 minutes and watch closely at the end to be sure that you don't overcook the tips. The cauliflower is done when they are a golden color and fork-tender.

How To Store and Cook Frozen Cauliflower

Now if you would like to store cauliflower for a little longer, there are two ways. The first being freezing. To freeze cauliflower you must:

- Select tender firm cauliflower stalks with firm heads that are washed and any woody portions removed.
- Wash by using the method above and cut into manageable sizes. Think about how you plan to use this cauliflower in your favorite recipes and cut accordingly.
- Blanch medium portions for 3 minutes and large portions for 4 minutes.
- Drain and let Cool
- Pack into freezer jars or plastic bags. Be sure to remove as much air as possible to prevent freezer burn.

- Label and freeze
- They will last if sealed correctly up to 12 months in your freezer

Cast Iron Ham and Veggie Bake

1 16 oz bag of frozen cauliflower
 1 16 oz bag of frozen broccoli
 2 tsp of butter for toasting bread crumbs
 ¼ cup bread crumbs
 ¼ tsp parley
 ¼ tsp oregano
 2 Tbsp butter for the roux
 2 Tbsp flour
 1 ½ cup milk
 ¾ cup shredded cheese
 ½ cup parmesan cheese
 1 slice of cook ham steak, cut into bite-size pieces



Follow the above recipe for roasting cauliflower and roast the thawed cauliflower and broccoli until done. Meanwhile, warm a large cast-iron pan on medium heat. Melt the butter for toasting the bread crumbs. When melted at the bread crumbs, parsley, and oregano to the pan. Stir and fry until the bread crumbs

are slightly toasted. Remove breadcrumbs from the pan into a bowl and set aside. Return the pan to the stove and on medium heat melt the butter for the roux. Once melted add flour. Stir until warmed through and creamy. Slowly add the milk as you stir. Bring to boil, stirring constantly, cook, and stir until thickened into a roux. Remove from heat, add both cheeses, stir until melted. Add the ham, cauliflower, and broccoli to the pan and stir all ingredients together. Sprinkle with the toasted bread crumb and bake in the 425-degree oven for 10 to 15 minutes or until the bake is heated through.

.How To Cook Canned Cauliflower

The second long-term storage for cauliflower is pressure canning. I want to say again it is important to follow your canning books instructions because they know what they are talking about. The below instructions are from my Ball Blue Book! To pressure can cauliflower you must:

- Remove any large stems or leaves. Wash as instructed above in a brine. Rinse thoroughly
- Cut into pieces that will fit in your jar and blanch for 4 minutes
- Pack into your clean jars and top with 1 teaspoon salt for quart jars and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt for pint jars
- Fill the jar with blanching water to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the top of the jar
- Seal with the lid and band

- Process in a pressure canner: Quarts 40 minutes and Pints 25 in 10 lbs of pressure or follow the instruction that came with your pressure canner.

Cauliflower Crust for Pizza~

1 quart of cauliflower,
drained
1 cup mozzarella cheese
1 egg
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated parmesan
cheese
Olive oil



Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Place the drained cauliflower in a food processor and pulse until grated. Remove grated cauliflower from the food processor and place it in a medium bowl. Stir in the egg and cheese to form the pizza dough. Next, drizzle some olive oil on a baking dish and coat the pan. Place the dough in the center of your greased pan and spread it out with your fingers into a circular pizza shape. Pinch up the edges to form a lip to your crust. Bake in a preheated oven for 20 minutes or until golden brown. The crust is now ready for your favorite pizza sauce, cheese and toppings. Once topped, place back in the oven until the cheese is melted or for 10 minutes. Enjoy!



*Planning Beyond the
Harvest With -
Garden Peas*



Benefits of Growing Peas

Peas are tiny but they are a beast when it comes to eating healthy. Peas are also high in protein and fiber, which makes them more filling and helps food move through the digestive system. They can help regulate blood sugar because they have a relatively low glycemic index.

They also are packed with vitamins like, vitamin A, B, C, and E! Peas also can reduce inflammation that can lead to heart disease, diabetes, and arthritis.

When Do I Harvest Your Peas

Picking your peas at their peak is your goal and that comes with knowing the perfect time to pick. Here is how:

- Peas will be ready to harvest in approximately 55 to 70 days after sowing. You can find the exact days to maturity on the back of your seed packet.

- If you know your planting date you can easily find your estimated harvest date. For example: if you sowed your peas on April 15th then your estimated harvest date, with 55 days to harvest, would be June 9th.
- This is when you should begin observing your peas for signs of harvest.
- Pea pods should be swollen and firm - peas should be developed in the pods.
- Harvest them every other day to keep pods from becoming large and starchy.
- Your pea's sweet taste will tell you when they are ready (I love eating them as an in the garden snack)
- Peas are best grown in the late spring and/or Autumn when temps are around 60° to 70°. Peas do not take the heat!

How To Harvest Your Peas

Once your peas are ready to harvest they are going to need to be picked in just the right way. Here is how:

- Harvest peas with two hands. One hand holds the vine and the other pinches the stem just above the seed pod and gives a slight tug. I like to use my thumb fingernail to slightly cut the stem when I pinch it.
- It is important you don't pull too vigorously as you may break the thin tendrils the plant uses for support.

- Peas are best picked in the morning when they will be crisp & crunchy for fresh eating. (You caught me! I love eating peas as I pick them!)
 - They should be cooled quickly to preserve their freshness and sweet taste. The sugar in peas quickly turns to bland starch after harvest unless cooled.
 - Keep plants picked to increase your harvest.
 - Also keep them well watered through your harvest period.
-
- How To Prepare Fresh Peas

After your pea pods are picked and cooled it is time to shell them. Shelling peas is easy!

- Wash the peas pods
- Using a knife remove the stem and remove any string fibers that seals the pod together
- Once the pod is opened, use your thumb to gently break the peas from the pod sides
- The peas will gently roll out of the pod so have a bowl ready

Once out of the shell the peas are ready for eating, cooking, or preserving. The pod can be discarded as it is going to be starchy and tough. But great for your chickens! Below is one of my favorite recipes for eating peas raw!

Creamy Pea Salad~

½ Cup Mayonnaise

2 TBSP Sour Cream

Splash Apple Cider

Vinegar

½ tsp black pepper

4 cups fresh garden peas

½ cup shredded Cheddar

Cheese

4 slices bacon, cooked and
diced

In a bowl mix together the mayonnaise, sour cream, vinegar, and pepper. Add the peas, cheese, and mix. Add salt to your taste. Sprinkle bacon over the top and serve. Can be stored in the fridge for a couple hours if you would like to make it ahead of time. (Serves 8)

How to Cook Fresh Peas

Cooking garden peas is just as easy as shelling them.

- Bring a pot of water to a rolling boil (use enough water to cover the amount of peas you are cooking)
- While waiting for water to boil, shell peas as stated above
- Once water is boiling pour your garden peas in the pot and set them for about a minute. Peas are done once they all rise to the top of the water. Will not take long.
- Remove the stove and drain.

- You can season with salt and butter to taste

But if you are looking for a unique way to eat peas is as mashed peas. I personally like them on toast with a fried egg on top!

Mashed Peas on Toast~

1 egg fried or poached
1 slice of freshly toasted
bread
½ cup peas, cooked
Cream Cheese
Cilantro
Olive Oil
Salt and Pepper

Mash the peas, a small amount of cream cheese, cilantro and olive oil together in a bowl with a potato masher or fork. Cook the egg as you desire. Toast the bread. Once everything is done assemble by spreading the mash on the toast and top with your egg. Season as desired with salt and pepper. (serves 1)

How To Preserve Your Peas

Freezing is the most common way to preserve your garden peas. I personally don't blanch them. Here is how to best use peas:

- eat or store shortly after picking to preserve that sweet taste.

- shell peas just before cooking and freezing. (remove the peas from the pea shell, I explain above)
- Store peas in the fridge if you plan to use them that evening. They will last about 5 to 7 Days in a sealed plastic bag
- to preserve for the winter: wash the shelled peas, blanch for 2 minute, and place in a sealable freezer bag. Remove as much air as possible and seal. Label with name, date and place directly in the freezer. (Fill bags with however much your recipes on your menu plan need. I usually store 1 cup in each bag.)

Peas can also be pressure canned and dehydrated to learn more look in preserving books.

How To Cook Frozen Peas

To cook a bag of frozen peas for a tasty side dish:

- bring a few cups of water to a boil. Enough to cover the amount of peas you will be cooking.
- Once water is at a rolling boil, carefully pour peas from the bag into the water.
- Stir them gently and let boil, uncovered, for about 2 to 5 minutes.
- Peas are done when they are warmed through and just slightly crunchy
- Drain water and enjoy!

Peas and Carrots~

Frozen Peas

2 Small Carrots, diced

1 Large Potato, diced

2 Green Onions, diced

2 Tbsp Butter

Salt and Pepper

½ cup broth



- In a medium saucepan, melt butter and saute the green onion. Add the broth, carrots, and potato. Cover the pan with a lid to steam the veggies for 15 minutes. Add the peas and cook until peas are heated through. Season with salt and pepper and serve. (serves 6)



Planning Beyond the Harvest With -

Pumpkin



Benefits of Pumpkins

Pumpkins are rich in beta carotene. Your body changes this antioxidant to vitamin A. You need vitamin A to see, ward off germs, and for your reproductive system to work the way it should. It also helps your heart, lungs, kidneys, and other organs stay healthy.

Pumpkin's rich orange color is also a sign it's packed with potassium. This is crucial for lowering blood pressure. Pumpkin seeds are also crammed with minerals and plant sterols that raise HDL cholesterol levels (the "good" kind) and help keep blood pressure numbers down, too. Studies show that higher potassium levels can lower your risk of stroke, kidney stones, and type 2 diabetes. Another bonus: Potassium may also increase bone mineral density, boosting your bone health.

Who knew, right?

When Do I Harvest Your Pumpkins

Picking your pumpkins at their peak is your goal and that comes with knowing the perfect time to pick. Here is how:

- Your best bet is to harvest pumpkins when they are fully mature. They will keep best this way. Do not pick pumpkins off the vine because they have reached your desired size. If you want small pumpkins, buy a small variety instead!
- A pumpkin is ripe when its skin turns a deep, solid color (orange for most varieties).
- When you thump the pumpkin with a finger, the rind will feel hard and it will sound hollow. Press your nail into the pumpkin's skin; if it resists puncture, it is ripe.

How To Harvest Your Pumpkins

Once your pumpkins are ready to harvest they are going to need to be picked in just the right way. Here is how:

- Harvest pumpkins and winter squashes on a dry day after the plants have died back and the skins are hard.
- To slow decay, leave an inch or two of stem on pumpkins and winter squash when harvesting them.

- To harvest the pumpkin, cut the fruit off the vine carefully with a sharp knife or pruners; do not tear. Be sure not to cut too close to the pumpkin; a liberal amount of stem (3 to 4 inches) will increase the pumpkin's keeping time.
- Handle pumpkins very gently or they may bruise.

How to Cure and Store Pumpkins

Pumpkins can easily be stored for later if you follow these steps:

- Pumpkins should be cured in the sun for about 10 to 14 days to harden properly. This is a great time to display your pumpkin on the front porch! If you're carving a pumpkin, carve no more than three days before Halloween or the pumpkin will begin to rot.
- Store pumpkins (after curing) in a cool, dry bedroom, cellar, or root cellar—anywhere around 55°F

How To Prepare Raw Pumpkin Puree

After your pumpkins are picked and washed it is time to get to the delicious middle.

- Wash the pumpkin
- Using a knife carefully cut your pumpkin in half. This may take several cuts but be sure to hold both the pumpkin and the knife firmly.



- Once the pumpkin is opened, use a spoon to scoop out the innards and seeds. You can give these to the chickens or make your own roasted pumpkins seeds below
- Safely cut the pumpkin to smaller pieces and then turn the cubes on their side and cut the meat from the skin.
- Place the chunks in a food processor to make a smooth puree

That's it. The leftover skin and such can go to the chickens or compost pile. Warning if you put seed in your compost pile they may resprout. You can use the puree for meals, recipes, smoothies, or soups. I have our favorite recipe below!

Pumpkin Pie Milkshake

This milkshake is a great way to utilize raw pumpkin puree and still enjoy a seasonal pumpkin pie milkshake.

- 1 cup cubed raw pumpkin
- 2 frozen bananas
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons raw sugar or honey
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Add all of the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. This recipe is so easy. (Serves 2)

How to Cook Fresh Pumpkins

Put what if you want to cook your pumpkins to make pumpkin puree. That's easy too.

- Wash the pumpkin
- Using a knife carefully cut your pumpkin in half. This may take several cuts but be sure to hold both the pumpkin and the knife firmly.
- Once the pumpkin is opened, use a spoon to scoop out the innards and seeds. You can give these to the chickens or make your own roasted pumpkins seeds below
- Season the pumpkin inside with a little salt and place in a baking dish cut side down.
- Put a small amount of water in the dish
- Place the dish in a 375 degree oven and bake until the fresh is soft and easy to poke through with a fork
- Pull the pumpkins from the oven and let cool. You don't want to do the next step while they are still hot
- Once cooled use a spoon and scoop the cooked flesh away and out of the skin of the pumpkin

You can use this puree in many different recipes like pumpkin pie, bread, cake and many more. This is also what you want to do before you freeze your pumpkin puree. By freezing you can preserve your pumpkin for many recipes to come. Here is one of our favorite recipes for using up frozen pumpkin puree!

Pumpkin Bars

2 cups flour

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice

1 cup vegetable oil

3 large eggs

1 cup packed dark brown sugar

1/3 cup sugar

1 can pumpkin puree or 2 cups frozen puree

1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 TBSP softened butter

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl mix together the oil, eggs, both sugars, defrosted pumpkin puree, and vanilla. Once mixed add in all of your dry ingredients slowly. Spray a 9 by 13 baking dish with the butter so your bars will not stick to the pan. Pour your mixture into your greased pan and spread out. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes or when the bars are cooked through and gold on top. While bars bake you can make a classic cream cheese frosting to frost your cooled bars with. Enjoy! (serves 10)

How To Preserve Your Pumpkins

Freezing is the easiest way to preserve your pumpkin puree as it is dangerous to pressure can any sort of puree. You can pressure-can your pumpkin in chunks. You do this by cutting up your pumpkin in the above raw puree. You just don't puree and pressure-can the chunks. You will need to follow precise instructions so follow the instructions you would find in a canning book, like Ball Blue Book of Canning. But here is all you would need to do to freeze your cooked pumpkin puree.

- Measure out the portions of puree you will use in many of your recipes. I like to do 2 cups
- Place puree in a freezer bag and seal. Be sure to get out as much air as possible
- Label with name, date and place directly in the freezer.

How To Cook Canned Pumpkins

If you pressure-can your own pumpkins you will need to drain and puree the chunks before you can use it in the following recipe but if you are purchasing canned pumpkin puree then you are ready to go!



Pumpkin Pecan Pie

For the Pecan Topping:

1/3 cup toasted pecans, finely chopped
1/4 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
2 tablespoons butter, softened

For the Pumpkin Filling:

2 cups pumpkin puree (one 15-ounce can) or one quart jar of pumpkin chunks
2 large eggs
1 cup milk
3/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon salt

For a deciduous butter crust recipe you can look [here](#). Follow the pie crust instructions for one crust and roll out your dough. Lay your dough in a 9 in pie pan, trim the edges and crimp. Set the pan aside. Preheat your oven to 425 degrees. In a large bowl or in the food processor that you puree your pumpkin chunks in, add your pumpkin and all of your filling ingredients, and mix. Set aside. Mix together all of the Pecan Topping ingredients in a small bowl. Once mixed, sprinkle in the bottom of the pie crust. It will rise to the top after baking. This next part is tricky.

Open the oven and pull out the oven rack part way and place the pie pan on the shelf (you will be filling the pie pan with your filling while it is in the oven) Grab your bowl of filling and spatula and pour the filling into the pan. Be sure to watch where your hands are at all times. This needs to be done because it is really hard to move a full pie pan to the oven without spilling. Slowly push the self back into the oven and bake for 15 minutes. Reduce the heat to 350 degrees and bake for an additional 35 to 40 minutes or until a butter knife slides into the pie and comes out clean. Let cool before serving. (serves 6)

What about those pumpkin seeds? Here is a simple recipe for roasted pumpkin seeds. It does seem simple but do make sure that you watch them closely so they don't burn.

Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

Clean Pumpkin Seeds

2 teaspoons olive oil
or melted butter

¼ tsp salt,



Preheat the oven to 425 degrees Line a baking sheet with parchment paper for easy clean-up.

Place your rinsed and dried pumpkin seeds on the prepared baking sheet. Add the oil and salt. Stir until all of the seeds are coated, then spread them in an even

layer across the baking sheet.

Bake for 12 to 16 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes, until the seeds are fragrant and turning golden. Season them with additional salt, to taste. If desired, season with black pepper, to taste, or stir in the pumpkin spice blend or curry powder. Enjoy. Cooled, leftover pumpkin seeds will keep well in a bag at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

"Let us not become weary
in doing good, for at the
proper time we will reap a
harvest if we do not give
up."

~ Galatians 6:9



Planning Beyond the Harvest With -

Apples



Benefits of Apples

There is some truth to the saying, “ an apple a day will keep the doctor away.” Apples can lower high cholesterol and blood pressure with their high soluble fiber content. This high fiber can also help with digestion, improve your immune system and help control your blood sugar levels. The list of their benefits can go on and on.

When Do I Harvest Your Apples

Picking apples will be determined by your variety, the weather, and its signs of ripeness. As this can vary from tree to tree below are a few guidelines you can use.

Here are some signs of apple ripeness:

- The apple stem separates easily from the branch. Under-ripe apples don't come off the tree easily.
- Check the firmness. Mature apples are firm and crisp, but not hard. Apples shouldn't be soft or easily bruised.

- Take a bite! The taste of ripe apples is crisp and juicy, not starchy and tangy. An apple's acidity and starch content decreases as it ripens.
- The background peel/skin color (the part of the apple skin that isn't red) changes from green to yellow (unless it's a green apple variety).
- The color of the peel inside the stem indentation changes from green to yellow.
- The apple's flesh is cream or white instead of light green.
- The apple's seeds turn from white to brown.

How To Harvest Your Apples

Apples are picked by hand, even in commercial orchards, and that is what you should do too. But if you do want to avoid using a ladder you can use an apple harvester. This is a long pole with a basket on the end for picking the apples. Here is a few techniques you can use:

- Some like the "Twist & Lift" technique: in which you gently twist the apples off, lifting them upwards to separate the apple's stem from the branch.
- Others roll the apple upwards first and then twist.
- You can also just gently turn apples upside down.
- Apples shouldn't be pulled straight away from the branch.
- The stem should separate from the branch easily if the apples are mature.

- Treat fruit gently. Try not to drop the apples, and don't let them be thrown. Apples bruise easily.

How To Prepare Fresh Apples

After your apples are picked it is time to get them ready for storage. Apples do have a fairly long shelf life if stored properly.

- Do not store any fall apples with bruises or soft spots as one rotten apple can spoil other healthy apples. They didn't come up with the phrase "one rotten apple" for nothing! So pull out any bruised apples to be used up quickly in applesauce or cider.
- Avoid washing fall apples before storing them. Water absorbs through the skin of the apple and will actually speed up the deterioration process. Instead, wait to wash apples until you are ready to eat them.
- Apples should be stored at a constant temperature. The best spot is in a perforated plastic bag placed in the fruit drawer of your kitchen's refrigerator. Just be sure not to store them with other produce such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, leafy



greens or potatoes as these items have a tendency to release a harmless gas that can make apples spoil faster.

- Unripe apples can be left out at room temperature to ripen, but be sure to check them periodically as they ripen much more quickly at room temperature than if they are stored in the refrigerator.
- When you are ready to enjoy an apple from your fall haul, simply rinse fresh apples with cool water. If you are looking for a deeper clean, wash apples with cool water mixed with a sprinkle of baking soda. Be sure to eat the larger apples first as smaller apples store better and have a tendency to last longer.

Raw Apple Crisp

I personally just love to slice up an apple and eat it with peanut butter. But I also love a raw apple crisp for breakfast.

1 chopped apple
1/2 cup granola
1/4 cup raisins
1/4 cup coconut oil
2 tsp honey
1/2 tsp cinnamon
pinch ground cloves

In a bowl mix together all the ingredients. You can serve as is or add a little milk to make a healthy cereal alternative. (Serves 2)

How to Cook Fresh Apples

Cooking a few apples is easy.

- Peel, core and slice your apples
- Place apples in a saucepan with just an inch of water so that the apples do not burn to the pan.
- Once water is boiling, let simmer for 10 minutes or until the apples are soft
- You eat now with just a hint of cinnamon or you can puree the apples to make applesauce.

Another way would be in apple pie.

Apple Pie

4-6 medium Apples, peeled and thinly sliced

3 Tbsp Flour

2 Tbsp Sugar

1 tsp. Cinnamon

1/8 tsp. Nutmeg

1/4 cup butter, in small chunks



Preheat the oven to 425. Roll out 1 pie crust and place in the bottom of your favorite Pie Pan. Pour the pie filling into the pie pan. Roll out the second pie crust and place over the top of pie pan. Trim off the extra pie crust. Turn and crimp crusts together. Cut small slits in the top crust for steam. Bake for 20 minutes at 425. Then turn your oven down to 375 for 45 minutes or until the

crust is golden brown and apples are cooked. Let cool and serve. Enjoy! (serves 5)

How To Preserve Your Apples

Freezing and canning is the most common way to preserve your apples. I like to make a large amount of the apple filling above and freeze in 1 pie amounts in a freezer bag. You can find this recipe here and when you are ready to cook your frozen pie filling you can use this recipe. You can also preserve the applesauce above by canning. Follow the instructions in your preserving book.

Apple can also be dehydrated:

- Peel, core and slice apple
- Lay slices on a dehydrator tray or on a lined baking sheet
- Place the apple in your dehydrator and dry until apple are dried to your liking
- Or place the baking sheets in a 250 degree oven and dry until apple are dried to your liking
- Store dried apple chips in a seal container



Conclusion

Do you see it?

A table covered in the delicious harvest that you worked so hard to grow. Your family is gathering to sit down. Your heart wells with the knowledge that you not only grew this food for your family but they are now about to taste it. They are about to eat the best food that you could provide for them. A single tear forms at the corner of your eye. Your child asks what is wrong? You say oh nothing dear, let's eat!

Doesn't that sound amazing! Isn't that why you worked so hard in the garden to bring the harvest to your family and with these few steps you can do it. You can present your harvest to your family!

I want to tell you right now that this is not going to be an easy task but is going to be the most rewarding of your life. I have shown you the steps needed for a few veggies but what about what you grow or how to get these delicious recipes on your family's plates even on the busiest of weeknight. That is why inside my eBook, *Planning Beyond the Harvest* I take you beyond just the information and teach you how to make your own plan

for what you grow so that you can provide your family with the best food everyday!

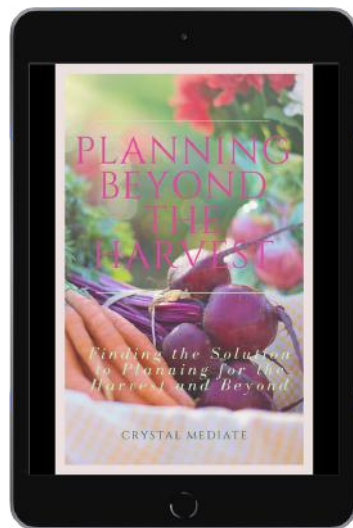
I share with you:

- The ins and outs of the different preserving methods and help you see which is best for you.
- Take you through changing up your favorite recipes to make them more healthy
- Show you how to make a meal plan that will put your harvest first

I can't wait to take you down a path of less stress and overwhelm when trying to figure out what to do next with your abundant harvest!

To learn more about the Planning Beyond the Harvest eBook you can go to www.redridgefarm.org/beyond

Have a blessed day,
Crystal





*About the
Author*

About the Author

My Name is Crystal Mediate and I am a co-owner of Red Ridge Farm. I am also the author and founder of the Red Ridge Farm Blog and Online Courses. Here at Red Ridge Farm, our mission is to offer timeless education to all who want it. Yes, I know what it is like to try to build a garden and homestead on my own. I truly feel it is my calling to help others build not only a garden but food security, and to help put healthy food on every plate I can!

So Why am I doing this?

I feel God has called me to be a teacher. Gardening and homesteading are what I know! Growing food for my family has helped us in many ways, we have food security, we have healthy options for our plate, and we have saved money on our monthly grocery bill. I started growing food out of necessity. My husband and I always planned for me to be a stay at home mom, but that meant we would be a single income family. I felt that even though I was home I was not destined to be a Day Time Tv-aholic. I wanted to contribute! I found the best thing I could do was to reduce our monthly bills.



Most of our bills were fixed but groceries were not. I thought if I could reduce this monthly bill, I could help. I also knew the answer was not in eating less. I researched coupons, meal planning, and so much more. What I found is that if we could grow our own food and grow it in a healthier manner, while also teaching our boys a good work ethic, I could save twice as much as any coupon could give us. That is when our first garden was born. Since then I have learned to grow our own chicken, turkey, pork, and how to preserve our harvest to last the whole year. I even raise dairy goats and Layer chickens, so we have access to fresh milk and eggs, daily.

Our mission here at Red Ridge Farm Homestead is to help you do the same. Through our Red Ridge Farm Creations Products, Online Courses, and so much more.

I want to help you grow! Grow a garden, a homestead, a healthy family, and grow closer to our Lord and Savior.

Come join our growing community of Fellow Growers!!



Follow-Up

For Follow-Up

To email me – crystalmediate@redridgefarm.org

To connect with me on social media – You can find me on Instagram and Pinterest @redridgefarmwyo on Facebook @wyoredridgefarm

To take action on making a plan for beyond the harvest. Grab the Planning Beyond the Harvest eBook. This eBook is for growers so that you will know how to harvest at just the right time to give your family the best product, so you can provide the best food for your family without feeling lost and worried you don't have the skills to do the next step.