



# PRESERVING NUTRIENTS *in* FOOD

**F**ood provides the ideal mix of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. But the nutrients in foods begin to decrease as soon as the fruit or vegetable is picked and continues to decline until the food is eaten. The sooner you eat the food, the less chance of nutrient loss. The water-soluble vitamins, especially thiamin, folic acid and vitamin C, can be destroyed during improper storage and excessive cooking. Heat, light, exposure to air, cooking in water and alkalinity are all factors that can destroy vitamins.

If food is not eaten within several days, freezing is the best method to retain nutrients. Frozen fruits and vegetables can be better than your grocer's fresh ones if they have been processed immediately after harvesting. Blanching naturally stops enzymatic changes that destroys vitamins. Here are some tips to aid you in preserving the nutrients in cooked foods.

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- ☼ Keep fruits and vegetables cool to prevent enzymes from destroying vitamins.
- ☼ Refrigerate food in airtight moisture-proof containers. The loss of nutrients is slowed near freezing temperatures, at high humidity, and less air contact.
- ☼ Avoid trimming and cutting fruits and vegetables into small pieces. The greater surface area allows oxygen to break down vitamins faster. The outer leaves of all greens and under the skins of fruits and vegetables, such as potatoes, carrots and apples, have more nutrients than the inner portion.
- ☼ Microwaving cooking, steaming, or using a pan or wok with very small amounts of water and a tight-fitting lid are best. More nutrients are retained when there is less contact with water and a shorter cooking time with less exposure to heat. Cook fruits and vegetables with their skins on.
- ☼ Minimize reheating food.
- ☼ Do not add baking soda to enhance a vegetable's green color. Alkaline products destroy vitamins.
- ☼ Store canned goods in a cool place and serve any liquid packed with the food. If you don't need all the liquid to cook the food, reserve the remainder for soup stock.
- ☼ Keep milk refrigerated and tightly capped, away from strong light. Riboflavin is very sensitive to direct light.

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