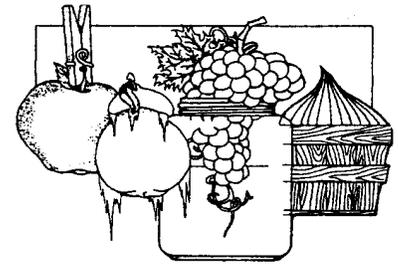


# Quality for Keeps



Information for those who produce and preserve food

## Storing root crops the old-fashioned way

*Many root crops can be easily stored for an extended period without processing, if the correct temperature and humidity conditions are maintained in storage.*

In the past, root cellars were commonly used to prolong the storage of fresh produce from large gardens. Most root crops do best with high humidity and temperatures between 32° and 40° F.

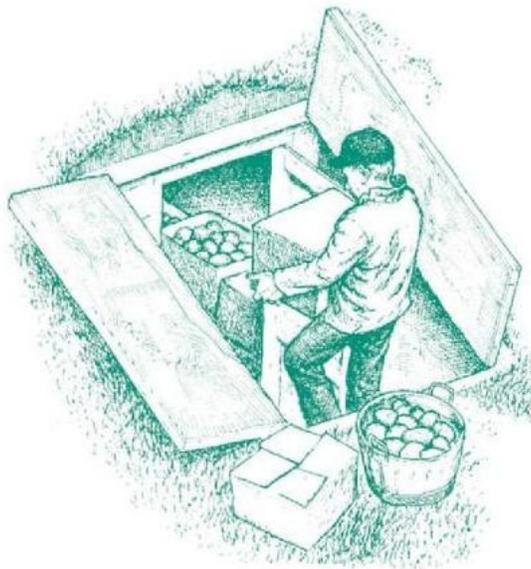
If possible, leave the plants in the ground, until just before the ground freezes. This gives the basement, or root cellar, more time to cool down. Harvest root crops before the ground freezes and when the soil is dry. Harvesting can be postponed for awhile if extra dirt and straw are placed over the vegetables to prevent freezing.

If the humidity is not high enough in the storage area, place the root vegetables in plastic bags, which have at least 4, 1/4-inch holes cut in the plastic bags for ventilation.

**Potatoes.** Potatoes are commonly stored in root cellars. Late maturing varieties of potatoes are best for storing.

After the potato tops have died and dried, dig potatoes carefully to avoid cutting and bruising. Brush away any dirt from the outside, then hold potatoes in a dark moist location at about 60 to 75 ° F for one to two weeks so that minor wounds heal. After this curing, move potatoes into

a dark, humid and cool storage location, about 45° F. Potatoes, when held at these storage conditions, keep from two to nine months.



If the right conditions for storage are not available, potatoes may be canned, dehydrated, or frozen. Home-canned potatoes must be pressure canned.

**Freezing.** Whole or sliced Irish potatoes do not freeze well, yielding a crumbly product. However, frozen French fries may be made using potatoes that have been stored 30 days. Mashed potatoes, twice-baked potatoes, and scalloped potatoes freeze well, but plan to use within a couple of weeks.

**Sweet potatoes.** Harvest sweet potatoes after the leaves begin to turn yellow, and around the time of the first frost. Cut the vines from the potatoes. Dig when the soil is dry and the weather is still warm. Harvest carefully, since sweet potato skins are delicate. Allow to lay on the ground for a couple of hours after digging before gathering them for curing.

The best conditions for curing are 85% humidity at about 85° F for 10 to 14 days. Once cure, the best storage temperature is 55° F.

To can or freeze sweet potatoes, cure them for a week before preparing. Canned sweet potatoes must be cut in pieces and pressure canned. Directions for canning and freezing potatoes may be found at:

<http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/hesguide/foodnut/gh1452.pdf> or <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/displaypub.aspx?p=gh1501>

***Never can mashed sweet potatoes, the product is too dense and is unsafe.*** Dehydrated sweet potatoes provide only a fair quality product.

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## Choose your apples wisely

*There are few treats as good as a fresh-picked Missouri apple.*

The climate and soil conditions in Missouri help to produce apples that have a great flavor. Jonathan, Red Delicious, and Golden Delicious are the most widely produced apples in Missouri.

Jonathan apples begin to be harvested in September, and have been grown in Missouri for over 150 years. Jonathans are good for eating fresh, or processing and freezing.

Red and Golden Delicious apples follow in mid-September. Both keep well in the refrigerator. Red Delicious apples are good for eating fresh and processing. Golden Delicious apples,

with their naturally sweet flavor, are great for eating, salads, pies, apple-sauce, and freezing.

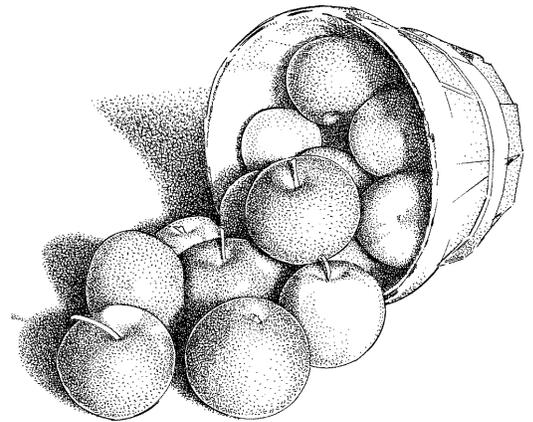
Gala apples have grown in popularity because of their sweetness and juiciness. An early variety, Galas, are excellent eaten fresh, but do not keep as long in storage like many other apples.

Fuji is another sweet apple that is primarily for eating. Fujis are a later apple, but keep better than Galas.

Following is a chart of other apples grown in Missouri, including harvest times and uses.

Hopefully you get the opportunity to enjoy some fresh Missouri apples, and preserve some to enjoy throughout the year.

*Source: University of Missouri Extension publication G6022.*



Cultivar	Typical Harvest Time	Fresh Eating	Processing (sauce, baking)	Salad	Freezing	Storage With Refrigeration
Akane	mid-August	X				2-3 months
Arkansas Black	mid-October	X	X			6+ months
Braeburn	mid-October	X				6+ months
Cortland	early September	X	X	X		3-6 months
Empire	mid-September	X	X		X	3-6 months
Enterprise	mid-October	X		X		3-6 months
Fuji	mid-October	X				3-6 months
Gala	mid-August	X				2-3 months
Golden Delicious	mid September	X	X	X	X	3-6 months
Goldrush	late October	X		X		3-6 months
Granny Smith	late October	X	X	X		3-6 months

## Helpful Hints

Cultivar	Typical Harvest Time	Fresh Eating	Processing (sauce, baking)	Salad	Freezing	Storage With Refrigeration
Honeycrisp	mid-August	X		X		3-6 months
Jonafree	early September	X				3-6 months
Jonagold	mid-September	X				2-3 months
Jonalicious	early September	X				3-6 months
Jonamac	mid-August	X				3-6 months
Jonathan	early September	X	X		X	3-6 months
Liberty	early September	X	X		X	3-6 months
Lodi	mid-July		X			few weeks
McIntosh	early September	X	X			3-6 months
Mutsu (Crispin)	late September	X	X	X	X	3-6 months
Northern Spy	mid-October		X			6+ months
Ozark Gold	late August	X	X			2-3 months
Pristine	late July	X		X		few weeks
Red Delicious	mid-September	X		X		3-6 months
Redfree	early August	X				few weeks
Rome Beauty	late September		X			3-6 months
Spartan	late September	X	X		X	3-6 months
Suncrisp	mid-September	X	X	X		2-3 months
Williams' Pride	late July	X				few weeks
Winesap	early October	X	X			6+ months
York	mid-October	X	X			6+ months

## Storing root crops the old-fashioned way *(Cont'd from page 1)*

**Carrots.** To root cellar carrots, harvest in late fall before the ground freezes. Dig carrots when the soil is dry. Cut off the carrot tops about 1/2-inch from the top of the carrot root. Carrots may be rinsed, but do not scrub. Dry the carrots thoroughly, place in plastic bags perforated with small holes. Root cellars work best for storage, but a refrigerator works well also. Carrots keep best when stored in a humid location at, 32° to 40° F.

Carrots can also be home-canned, frozen, or dehydrated. Choose small carrots for canning; slice or dice, process in a pressure canner.

**Beets and Turnips.** Store in perforated plastic bags with holes for two to four months in the refrigerator. Kohlrabi may be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator two to four weeks.

Beets can be home-canned in a pressure canner, or pickled and processed in a boiling water canner.

Turnips may be home-canned, but usually develop strong flavors. Beets, kohlrabi, and turnips may also be frozen or dried.

**Onions and garlic.** Treat both alike for storing. Harvest onions after the tops of the onions fall over. Garlic stems will not fall over, but are ready when at least half the stems turn brown.

Pull the onions, remove the tops, and cure the onions where they have good air circulation, until the necks dry down. Onions take two to three weeks to cure in a dry well-ventilated area. Onions may be dried outdoors, as long as they are protected from rain. Lay onions in a single layer on screens for easy drying. After drying, cut stems to 1-inch. When they rustle upon handling, move to a cool, dry storage area.

Yellow onions keep better than red or white onions; onions keep for six to seven months. Store in well

ventilated conditions, such as a mesh bag, at temperatures just below freezing. Leave the dry skins on onions and garlic.

Onions can be diced and frozen or made into onion rings and frozen. Garlic tends to get strong and bitter when frozen. Onions that are less than 1-inch in diameter may be canned in a pressure canner. Tiny or pearl onions can be pickled and processed in a boiling water bath. Garlic and onions are excellent dehydrated.

Sources:

<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/imp/mod01/01600025.htmleks>

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07601.html>

[http://www.umassgreeninfo.org/homegarden/pdf/dry\\_storage\\_of\\_vegetable\\_crops.pdf](http://www.umassgreeninfo.org/homegarden/pdf/dry_storage_of_vegetable_crops.pdf)

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/tog/storing.cfm>

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