

This time of year in New York City, there is an abundance of fresh produce available in grocery stores and at local farmers' markets. Many people take advantage of this by buying lots of their favorite seasonal fruits and vegetables, but it can be a challenge to eat everything before it starts to go bad. Too often, these delicious foods get thrown away due to poor planning. Some people, especially those on limited budgets, shy away from purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables for this reason. To make the most of your fresh produce, you can freeze it for later use while maintaining the nutritional content.

The best time to freeze fruits and vegetables is at the peak of their ripeness. Fruits should be washed and dried thoroughly before they are frozen. Depending on the fruit, they can be peeled and cut into pieces that are easier for thawing. Delicate berries should be arranged in a single layer on a baking sheet and placed in the freezer. Once frozen, they can be transferred to a plastic freezer bag or container. Frozen berries can be placed directly into a smoothie or yogurt; they should not be left to thaw completely because they will become mushy. Frozen fruits can be stored for a year without affecting their quality.

Vegetables should also be washed thoroughly and trimmed into desired sizes, or separated into smaller portions, before freezing. It is important for the vegetables to be blanched in boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes, and then transferred directly to a bowl of ice water and drained thoroughly before they are packaged to be frozen. Blanching and shocking vegetables helps remove any dirt or bacteria, slows the loss of vitamins and minerals, and ensures the vegetables retain their bright colors. Frozen vegetables can be stored for 18 months without affecting their quality.

It is important to pack fresh produce correctly before freezing. Packing fruits and vegetables in air tight containers or space saving freezer bags is essential to maintaining moisture and preventing any contact with the air, which can affect its flavor or color.

So go out and support your local farmer and community by purchasing fruits and vegetables. If you are unable to enjoy them now, simply freeze them and enjoy them later. Your body, taste buds, and wallet will thank you later.

