

Get the most from frozen vegetables

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(HealthDay)—When it comes to cooking veggies, fresh from the farmer's market always tastes best. But when you're cooking produce out of season, head to the freezer section of your favorite store.

Veggies are typically frozen at the height of freshness, making them a great winter staple.

Dense vegetables in particular are ideal for freezer storage, because they retain their texture when reheated. Put peas, edamame, Brussels sprouts and artichokes at the top of your list. As long as you don't overcook them, they'll also retain their nutrients.

Microwaving can dry out some vegetables. To defrost them quickly, place them in a colander under cold running water for a few minutes. Then add them to green salads or fold into any cooked dish.

One of the easiest ways to use frozen vegetables is to add them straight from the [freezer](#) to soups, stews and chilis during the last few minutes of cooking.

Frozen vegetables also are great in breakfast smoothies: Simply blend frozen edamame—a protein powerhouse—along with your fruits and yogurt.

Frozen artichokes are far less expensive than fresh, plus all the prep work has been done for you. Here's a simple recipe that's both a crowd pleaser and a great alternative to bottled dressings when you want a dip for carrot sticks.

Artichoke Dip

- 1/2 cup frozen artichokes, defrosted
- 1/2 cup olive-oil mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Cayenne to taste

Finely chop the artichokes and transfer to a bowl. Add in the rest of the

ingredients and stir well to combine. Serve cold or [transfer](#) to a 4-cup, heat-safe baking dish or ramekin and bake at 350 degrees until the cheese has melted, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Yield: 4 servings.

More information: The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a comprehensive guide to [choosing frozen](#) as well as canned foods.

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