



Stretching fruits and veggies.

In last month's newsletter, I detailed some of the shocking food waste statistics in our nation. This month, and over the next few months, I want to talk about different ways we can work towards reducing the amount of food we waste. Did you know you can freeze kale, spinach, cabbage, mushrooms, blueberries, and strawberries in order to preserve them? These are all fairly common foods that we receive in large quantities at Grace Klein Community. Let's take a glance at some of the ways you can prepare these foods for freezing.

A quick google search will provide you with plenty of helpful articles that detail how to prepare produce for freezing and why each step is important. Here's a quick summary of some of the information I've found so far:

For leafy greens like spinach, kale, and cabbage, you'll want to wash the produce first. Second, if it's kale or cabbage, you'll need to chop it for easy storage. Next, you blanch the leaves typically for 2 to 3 minutes in boiling water or steam them for roughly the same amount of time. To complete the blanching process, quickly place the leaves in ice water for the same amount of time. You'll want to dry the leaves with either a clean towel, paper towels, or a salad spinner before placing them in a freezer bag. To avoid freezer burn, use a vacuum seal or if you want to save money, you can zip your regular freezer bag most of the way and suck the excess air out with a straw before you finish sealing it.

There are a few options for mushrooms. The quickest, easiest way is to brush the raw mushrooms clean (washing them with water will make them mushy) and quick freeze them on a tray with parchment paper. Once they're fully frozen, transfer them into freezer bags and remove as much air as possible. That method, while quick and easy, will leave you with a mushy consistency when you thaw the mushrooms later which is good for soups and casseroles. If you want to have more options, you'll need to either blanch with steam or sauté the mushrooms before freezing.

With blueberries and strawberries you could just toss them into a freezer bag, seal them and freeze them but that will leave you with quite a project when it comes time to thaw and use them since clumps of them will freeze together. To avoid that, here are a few steps to make your life a little easier in the long term: Being careful to handle the berries as little as possible to avoid bruising the skin, pick any stems and/or leaves off of the berries. Wash them in a colander with cold water and leave them to dry overnight or for several hours. Once they're completely dry, put them on a baking tray in a single layer, cover that with plastic wrap and place it in the freezer for at least 4 hours. When they're fully frozen, you can transfer them into an airtight container for storage and not have to fight with clumpy chunks of ice and berries when you're ready to thaw them.

I highly recommend that you try one of these methods with some of the excess food you get from GKC or elsewhere. You can even look up how to prepare other foods for freezing. I found the methods in this newsletter on HGTV.com just by searching "can you freeze mushrooms?" on Google. They have a TON more articles that tell you how to prepare a huge variety of foods for freezing. If you have a smartphone and a data plan, be ready to look up if certain fruits and/or veggies can be frozen the next time you're shopping for produce. You could save money and reduce food waste by stretching those fruits and veggies beyond their normal shelf life. You might even find yourself having a good time preserving food to enjoy later or share with friends, family, or even strangers.

Giorgio Fareira



How Can You Help?

I usually don't ask specifically for donations in my letters, but I'm asking this time. We're growing and with growth comes more responsibility and costs.

Please consider giving to Grace Klein Community. A one-time donation is awesome! A monthly commitment is amazing. Thank you!

Donations can be given online through gracekleincommunity.com/donate
OR

check donations can be mailed to:

Grace Klein Community,
1678 Montgomery Hwy #104, Birmingham, AL 35216.

Include "Giorgio" in memo.