

WYLDER SPACE

# Seasonal Pantry Guide



@wylderspace

## Spring (March – May)

### March

#### **Asparagus:**

Freeze or pickle asparagus spears to enjoy this early spring veggie year-round. Quick-pickle in a vinegar brine (water-bath canning) for a crisp, tangy treat, and blanch & freeze extra spears for soups or stir-fries later **on**.

#### **Spinach:**

Blanch and freeze young spinach leaves to preserve their nutrients and flavor. You can also dehydrate hearty greens (spinach, kale) into green powder for smoothies and soups.

#### **Rhubarb:**

Capture rhubarb's tart flavor in jams or compotes (perfect for water-bath canning). Chop and freeze any extra rhubarb – it will be ready for pies and sauces even when rhubarb season has passed.

### April

#### **Strawberries:**

Peak spring strawberries are perfect for homemade jams and jellies (water-bath canning). You can also freeze whole berries or puréed strawberries for smoothies, and even can a simple syrup or pie filling to savor their sweetness.

#### **Leafy Greens:**

Spring greens (like kale, chard, spring spinach) are abundant now. Preserve these hardy greens by blanching and freezing them for later use. Dehydrating greens into chips or flakes is another way to make a healthy snack or soup additive. (Delicate salad greens don't preserve well – enjoy those fresh!)

May

### **Peas:**

Harvest sweet spring peas and blanch them for freezing – this locks in flavor and texture for months. If you have an overload, you can pressure-can peas (since they're low-acid) following proper guidelines, but freezing tends to preserve taste and color better.

### **Berries:**

As more berries (like blueberries, raspberries, early blackberries) come into season, turn them into jams or preserves (water-bath canning) to capture their flavor. Flash-freeze berries on a tray then bag them for easy use in baking and smoothies. For a fun treat, puree and dehydrate berries into fruit leather.

### **Radishes:**

Preserve crisp radishes beyond spring by pickling or fermenting them. Quick-pickle sliced radishes in vinegar (refrigerator or water-bath canning for longer shelf life), or try fermenting radish halves with spices for a probiotic-rich snack. This extends their usable life and adds zesty crunch to your pantry.

## Summer (June – August)

June

### **Cherries:**

Enjoy the start of stone-fruit season by making cherry jam or cherry pie filling (water-bath canning). You can also pit and freeze cherries for desserts, or dehydrate pitted cherries into chewy dried fruit for snacking.

### **Tomatoes:**

Early tomatoes are coming in! Can them as salsa or tomato sauce (water-bath canning with added acid, or pressure canning for unacidified recipes) to capture that fresh flavor. Extra tomatoes can also be dehydrated into “sun-dried” tomatoes – a great way to add depth to dishes later.

### **Zucchini:**

This prolific summer squash can be preserved in multiple ways. Pickle zucchini slices or make zucchini relish (water-bath canning) for a tangy condiment. You can also grate and blanch zucchini for freezing (wonderful for zucchini bread or fritters in winter), or dehydrate thin slices into zucchini chips for a healthy snack.

July

### **Cucumbers & Green Beans:**

Preserve these crunchy summer veggies by pickling them. Cucumbers are ideal for classic dill pickles – ferment them in a salt brine for probiotic sour pickles, or use vinegar brine for crisp bread-and-butter pickles (water-bath canned). Green beans can be pickled into “dilly beans” with garlic and dill (water-bath canning). Blanch and freeze any surplus green beans for casseroles, stir-fries, and soups later on.

### **Stone Fruits (Peaches & Plums):**

Summer peaches and plums are at their juiciest. Capture their sweetness in jams, jellies, or fruit butters (water-bath canning). You can also can peach or plum slices in light syrup for desserts. Dehydrate slices of peaches or plums into chewy chips, or even dry whole pitted plums to make prunes – a naturally sweet, long-lasting snack.

### **Berries (Blueberries & Raspberries):**

Mid-summer brings blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries in abundance. Make mixed berry jams or blueberry preserves (water-bath canning) to enjoy on your toast year-round. These berries also freeze exceptionally well; spread them on a tray to freeze, then store in bags for easy measuring. If you have more than you can jam or freeze, try infusing vinegar or liquor with berries for unique pantry staples. (Tip: Freezing berries whole keeps them from clumping and preserves their shape.)

August

## **Corn:**

Sweet corn is at peak freshness. For long-term storage, cut kernels off the cob and blanch them for freezing – they'll retain that sweet taste for winter chowders and sides. You can also pressure-can corn (plain kernels or corn salsa) since it's a low-acid food.

## **Love pickles?**

Make a corn relish with vinegar (water-bath canning) for a tangy topping. Drying corn kernels (or even whole popcorn cobs if you grow popcorn varieties) is another way to preserve corn for grinding or popping.

## **Melons:**

Watermelons, cantaloupe, and other melons are ripe now. While melons are best fresh, you can get creative to avoid waste. Make watermelon rind pickles (sweet-spiced pickled rinds, water-bath canned) to use the part often thrown away. You can also puree melon flesh and dehydrate it into a fruit leather or jerky – a fun, candy-like treat. Freezing melon in chunks or balls is an option (better for later smoothies or punches, though texture will soften).

## **Tomatoes & Peppers:**

Late summer means tomatoes and peppers are in full swing – perfect for combining into salsas and sauces. Cook up a big batch of tomato salsa with peppers and onions (water-bath can if you add sufficient acid, or pressure can for safety if not). Tomato sauce, pasta sauce, or ketchup can also be made now and canned for easy meals.

## **For peppers alone:**

roast and freeze extra bell peppers to use in stews and fajitas, and consider fermenting hot peppers into a homemade hot sauce (just blend after fermenting and bottle it). You can even string up hot chili peppers to air-dry, then grind them into chili flakes or powder for your spice rack.

Fall (September – November)

September

### **Apples:**

Orchard season begins! Turn crisp apples into applesauce or apple butter (water-bath canning) to spread on toast or use in baking. You can also can apple pie filling (with proper canning-safe thickener) so you're ready for holiday pies. Don't forget dehydration – thinly sliced apples can be dried into delicious apple chips, and extra apples can be pressed into cider or fermented into apple cider vinegar for later use.

### **Pears:**

Juicy pears soften quickly, so preserve them at their peak. Can pear slices in light syrup or spiced syrup (water-bath canning) for a treat. Pears also make wonderful jam, chutney, or butter (try a spiced pear butter – it's like autumn in a jar). For something different, dehydrate pear slices; they turn sweet and candy-like when dried, making a great snack.

### **Pumpkin & Winter Squash:**

Early pumpkins and squash (like sugar pumpkins or spaghetti squash) start appearing now. Pressure-can cubed pumpkin or squash (low-acid requires pressure canning) to use later in soups and pies. You can also roast and purée pumpkin, but do not can puréed pumpkin – instead freeze the puree in portions. Another option: make a fragrant pumpkin butter with spices (store it refrigerated or freeze it, since it's too dense to can safely).

October

### **Root Vegetables (Carrots, Beets, etc.):**

Fall root crops are ready. Preserve carrots, beets, parsnips, or turnips by pressure-canning them (packed in water or as part of soups/stews) for shelf-stable use. You can also pickle some roots: for example, can pickled beets in a vinegar brine (they come out tangy-sweet and retain that gorgeous color). Fermenting is an option too – try fermenting carrot sticks with garlic and dill, or a mix of grated root veggies for a flavorful kraut-style ferment. Dried root vegetable chips (carrot or beet chips) can be made with a dehydrator for healthy snacks.

### **Winter Squash:**

Gardens are yielding butternut, acorn, and other hard squashes now. These store well in a cool, dark place, but you can preserve them further if needed. Cube and pressure-can winter squash if you want ready-to-use pieces later (great for quick mashes or casseroles). You might also blanch and freeze chunks of squash, or slice and dehydrate them into vegetable “jerky.” Utilizing your squash in hearty soup recipes and pressure-canning the soup is another excellent way to have ready meals (and it preserves the squash along with other veggies).

### **Cabbage:**

Big fall cabbages are perfect for fermentation projects. Shred and ferment cabbage into sauerkraut or kimchi – a classic fall preservation method that will yield jars of probiotic-rich veggies to enjoy for months. Sauerkraut can ferment in a crock/pail and then be refrigerated (or water-bath canned if you want to store it without refrigeration, though heat-processing will kill the beneficial bacteria). This is the season to embrace fermenting as the garden winds down.

November

### **Cranberries:**

Fresh cranberries are in season leading up to the holidays. Cook up cranberry sauce or cranberry jam (water-bath canning) to stock your pantry and for gifting. You can also dehydrate cranberries (slice or pop them first and sweeten a bit) to create homemade “Craisins,” or freeze extra bags of cranberries – they’ll keep for a year and can go straight from freezer to pot for sauce or baking.

### **Storage Crops (Onions, Potatoes, Garlic):**

By now, you may have a stash of onions, potatoes, and garlic from the fall harvest. These keep for months in cool storage, but late fall is a good time to use them in preserved recipes. Combine these staples with other veggies to make hearty soups or broths. For example, simmer onions, potatoes, carrots, and herbs into a vegetable soup or stock, then pressure-can it in jars for a quick winter meal base. You can also pickle pearl onions or can French onion soup. Using up stored produce now ensures nothing goes to waste as we head into the cold months.

### **Mixed Fall Vegetables:**

Take any remaining garden vegetables (carrots, celery, late zucchini, peppers) and preserve them before winter hits. A great approach is to create a big batch of minestrone or harvest stew and pressure-can it. Alternatively, freeze pre-chopped mixed veggies in freezer bags to have a “soup mix” ready for later. This clears out the last of the season’s produce and rewards you with convenient homemade meals. (By preserving these together, you save time and capture a little of each fall flavor in one jar!)

## Winter (December – February)

### December

#### **Citrus Fruits (Oranges & Tangerines):**

Winter brings bright citrus. Make orange or mixed citrus marmalade (water-bath canning) to add a burst of sunshine to your pantry – a great project for gifting, too. You can also candy citrus peels (simmer in sugar syrup and dry them) for a sweet treat that preserves the zest. If you have excess oranges or tangerines, squeeze the juice and freeze it in ice cube trays, and dry some grated zest to use as a spice.

#### **Winter Squash & Root Veggies:**

Continue to enjoy and preserve stored vegetables this month. Any pumpkins or squash still on hand can be used in new ways: cook up a big pot of spiced squash soup and pressure-can it for easy lunches, or cube and roast squash then freeze for quick oven reheats. Root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, and parsnips can go into stocks or stews now – fill the slow cooker with veggies (and perhaps bones if you use them) to create a rich broth, then pressure-can or freeze it. This not only warms you in the winter but also extends these veggies' shelf life even further.

January

### **Citrus (Lemons & Limes):**

Lemons are abundant in mid-winter. Try preserving lemons in salt (a traditional fermented preserve popular in Moroccan cuisine) – simply pack quartered lemons with salt and lemon juice in a jar and let them cure. These preserved lemons add incredible flavor to dishes and will keep for months. You can also make lemon jam or curd; jar and refrigerate curd (it contains eggs/butter), or water-bath can a sweet lemon jelly to brighten up winter mornings. Don't forget limes: a zesty lime marmalade or frozen lime juice cubes can be handy for cooking and cocktails.

### **Hardy Winter Greens:**

In some regions, hardy greens like kale, collards, or winter spinach are still growing. Harvest these nutrient powerhouses and blanch & freeze them so none go to waste. Frozen kale and collards are excellent for tossing into soups or sautés. If you have an excess, you can also experiment with small-batch ferments (for example, ferment chopped kale with garlic and chili for a spicy kraut) or dry the greens to crumble into green powder. Even if fresh produce is sparse, these greens keep your preservation habit going through winter.

### **Beets & Winter Radishes:**

Late-season root crops such as beets or large winter radishes (like daikon or black radish) can be harvested or found at winter markets. Pickle red beets with vinegar and spices (for water-bath canning) to make classic pickled beets that stay good for a year. Daikon radishes are fantastic for fermenting – make a batch of kimchi or Japanese-style pickled daikon (takuan) to add a crunchy, flavorful preserved veggie to your pantry. These roots store well in cold storage, but pickling or fermenting now will ensure they remain tasty until spring.

February

### **Citrus (Grapefruit & Blood Oranges):**

Late winter citrus varieties are now available. Grapefruits and blood oranges can be made into a tangy marmalade or jelly (their beautiful color really shines in a jar). Consider canning a mixed citrus marmalade that combines grapefruit with the sweetness of oranges or lemons. You can also supreme (segment) and freeze grapefruit sections for a refreshing snack, or infuse vinegar with orange peel for a homemade cleaning solution or cooking vinegar – a clever way to preserve that citrus essence.

### **Stored Roots & Tubers:**

This is the final stretch of winter – time to finish off any stored produce from last season. Check your potatoes, carrots, onions, and other root vegetables in the pantry; if they're starting to sprout or wilt, rescue them by making a big batch of soup or stew. You can pressure-can the soup (ensuring all ingredients and times meet safety guidelines) or freeze it in portions. This not only prevents waste but also frees up jars and space for the coming spring's new preserves. As you use up the last stored veggies, clean and sterilize your jars and equipment – spring is around the corner, and you'll be filling those jars again soon!

By following the seasons and preserving as you go, you'll keep a well-stocked, sustainable pantry. This seasonal rhythm of canning, freezing, drying, and fermenting helps you capture peak flavors and reduce waste. Enjoy the empowerment that comes from working with nature's harvest schedule – each jar on your shelf is a step toward year-round food self-sufficiency and delicious, home-preserved meals. Happy preserving!

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