

🍏 SOMERSET APPLE TREATS 🍏

Notes on drying apples and other fruit and veg

🍏 **Why dry fruit and Veg? it's fun, saves money, green, healthy and very tasty!**

Drying fruit&veg is a great way of preserving it beyond its normal eating season. It is a way of making use of excess seasonal crops. If properly dried and kept, fruit such as apples can be eaten up to a year later. Dried apples can be very tangy and tasty, and a great nibble/snack. Kids often really like them! They also retain most of the health qualities of fresh apples. Even sharp cooking apples, (e.g. Bramleys), become nice to eat when dried. Apples which are a bit damaged / misshapen can be chopped and the best bits dried. Thus drying apples and other things can:

- 🍏 Reduce waste of local produce. (Lots of fresh produce is wasted each year).
- 🍏 Support traditional / local food cultures and businesses. (e.g. English orchards in places like Somerset, Kent, Herefordshire).
- 🍏 Reduce food miles. lot of dried apple and other produce sold in UK are imported from China, while UK orchards are struggling).
- 🍏 Support local varieties and local food cultures. It is interesting to see/taste the differing quality of different varieties of apples when dried. We do this each autumn.
- 🍏 Support biodiversity in traditional orchards. Traditional orchards are vital spaces of local (food) culture and for biodiversity. The more ways in which their apples can be sold and consumed the better!
- 🍏 Many communities have lots of apple trees in their gardens and hedgerows. These could be harvested and preserved. This could be a community enterprise!! We have worked with the Companion Planting Project in Bristol to do this.

🍏 **How?**

It is best to wait until your apples are quite ripe. Then it is simply a process of:

- 🍏 Pick (or pick up)
- 🍏 Wash carefully
- 🍏 Core and slice
- 🍏 Dip in lemon juice (to prevent browning) , we use organic lemon juice, some have sulphites in them
- 🍏 Place in a food dryer / dehydrator for required period of time (maybe 5 – 9 hours!!).

The time it takes to dry the slices depends on:

- 🍏 Type of apple, thickness of slice, juiciness, type of dryer, degree of dryness required.

We usually leave the peel on the apple as it is prettier, tastier, healthier and quicker, but often apples are peeled before drying.

Once dried and cooled, they need to be stored in airtight containers, and in a dry, cool , dark(ish) place.

🍏 **How Dry?**

Apples can be dried to be like crisps - dried apple crisps are produced in UK (e.g. a Kent based company) - or can be left a bit softer and chewier. The moisture content has to be reduced to below around 20%. This can be tested commercially, but it is a matter of look, feel and taste when doing it at home. When squeezed, or chewed, no obvious moisture must be present. Dried apples will have a dry rattle sound when shaken in a box; look wrinkled (not pulpy); and snap if really dry. For long term storage - the drier the better!

🍏 Ways of Drying?

Traditionally, various foods have been dried by simply hanging them out in the sun on strings, or in racks - it helps if you live somewhere sunny!! It is possible to build solar food dehydrators - glass topped racks with shelf design that encourages air flow. These work brilliantly in hot countries. They can work here, but there is the drawback of unpredictable weather. An extra drawback for this in the UK is that the apple crop comes in the autumn. Instructions on how to make a solar dryer can be found in a book by Ebon Fodor (Google). It is possible to dry apples and other fruit in an ordinary oven. But a better option is one of the domestic scale food dehydrators for sale. These basically have rack systems, blow hot air through the racks, and have temperature controls, timers, and other features.



Stokli (up to 10 trays)

Excalibur



L'Equipe



Larger commercial scale driers are available, e.g. TSM Model D-14 Commercial Dehydrator



In the Second World War the American Army built large scale food dehydrators as a means of getting foods that would not perish to their troops

A number of very good books are available that set out how to dry and store lots of different types of produce, and also recipes based on dried produce. Food drying is popular in the US and at least two US universities have published information on food drying which is freely available on the web. University of Missouri / University of Georgia. A Google search will find these. (Somerset Apple Treats).

Instructions to build a wood fired outdoor fruit drying kiln <http://www.backwoodshome.com/articles/hooker41.html>

Instructions for a new solar powered dryer are here <https://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/tools/solar-food-dehydrator-plans-zm0z14jjzmar>

<http://somersetappletreats.wordpress.com/contact/>. All due care with food must be taken! More detailed information can be found in the sources identified above. 🍏