# Food preservation essay

Familiarise yourself with the reasons behind selecting any particular method of food preservation. Your choice of food preservation will depend on weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of each method. You should consider the following factors when deciding on which method to use: Space: The amount of space you have will definitely impact on your choice of preservation. Someone living in a farmhouse can probably store dozens of preserved fruits in jars, whereas someone living in an apartment is unlikely to have the space to spare for rows of preserved plums.

Climate: The climate can aid or hinder different storage methods. What might store beautifully through a Canadian winter may well rot during an Australian one. Available equipment: Some preserving methods require specialised equipment that you may not have access to, or that you may be unwilling to use. For example, not everybody enjoys the sterilization process required to preserve fruit in jars and not everyone can build a smokehouse. Cost: Naturally, the costs involved in preserving your food should be weighed against the cost of purchasing the food from a local market, supermarket or other source.

In addition, there may be costs in using up storage space, costs in purchasing equipment etc. Care should be given, however, to include the benefits of enjoyment from preserving one’s own food, as well as the health, environmental and nutrient benefits that might arise from preserving homegrown produce, costs that are very hard to quantify and should weigh heavily in your decision-making. Nature of the food: Be realistic about the ability of the food to be preserved. Some food will not tolerate any form of preserving and needs to be eaten fresh.

This means that you need to do your research. Also, some foods change during the preserving process and become less palatable or even take on characteristics that are less health-giving. For example, use of nitrites to preserve meat can turn healthy meat into a potentially carcinogenic product. Hygiene and safety: Your ability to maintain a high level of hygiene and safety during the preservation process is important. If you cannot meet basic standards, it is best to not attempt a particular preservation method and to either substitute for a safer method or choose to not preserve the food.

Other issues: Perhaps there are health issues involved in preserving. For example, some people are unable to tolerate preservatives used to create dry fruit. Whilst it is possible to dry them organically, they will discolour and this may not be to the liking of some consumers. There are numerous ways to preserve food, many of which have been used for centuries and some, like refrigeration generated by electricity, that are very recent. Be aware of the different ways of preserving food. There are many possible ways to preserve food and each one has different considerations.

As discussed in the previous step, it is important to assess each of the possible preservation methods that you might be considering using against the factors that are outlined above. Drying. Drying is an ancient technique of food preservation and works well for many food types. It is an inexpensive method of food preservation, as you rely on the sun or an oven. Dried foods are compact and easily stored or carried. The greatest disadvantages of drying food include loss of colour, loss of flavour and loss of vitamins. Some of these losses can be mitigated by not drying the food too long.

Salting: Salt is another ancient method of preservation. Salt can be used as part of the drying process. Salt increases the storage time of some foods such as fish and it enhances the flavour of dried foodstuffs. The use of a salt water brine is another common method of preservation and it has the benefit of stopping the growth of harmful organisms. Whilst it is possible to wash off excess brine or salt from salted food, this food will taste salty and the over-consumption of salt does carry a risk of disease. Canning or bottling. This process requires canning equipment and the ability to use a heat source.

Foods preserved by this method are sealed in a closed container, such as a can, glass jar or bottle. Such foods can be stored for up to a year. The cost of canning or bottling can be expensive after purchasing the equipment and use of heating fuel and it is a fiddly process requiring sterilization and knowledge of the temperatures involved. Canning cannot be done in an oven but must be done using a water or steam bath. There is a risk of severe food poisoning if this process is not followed properly, especially in the case of low-acid foods such as vegetables and meat. Dehydration.

There are many dehydration products on the market for a low price. Dehydration is a good means for making food small for storage or carrying on trips and it is easily restored to its original plumpness or juiciness through the addition of water. Sugaring. Preserving through the use of tree saps or sugar is commonplace in some parts of the world. Trees such as the maple produce a syrup which is high in sugar and maple syrup can be stored for a long time. Sugar that is added to jams, jellies, relishes and preserves helps to lengthen the period of time that these condiments last. Oil and fat.

Some items can be stored in oil or fat. For example, herbs can be steeped in oil. Live animals and plants. If there is room to grow plants and keep animals, this can be another method of preserving food. Naturally, there must be space and a knowledge of animal care is required. In some parts of the world, the possibility of an all-year round vegetable and fruit garden means that it is possible to be self-sufficient throughout the year without having to resort to other forms of preserving unless wished. Curing and smoking. Drying using smoke can be used for meats, fish, cheese and nuts.

Curing requires the addition of curing agents followed by smoking to preserve the food. Although smoked and cured meat can taste better, be aware that nitrates and nitrites can be carcinogenic. Bin storage. If you have access to a cool, dark place, such as a cellar, it is possible to store foods for shorter periods of time just relying on the coolness of the room. Additional storage potential can be provided by storing items in bins filled with sand. Pot-in-pot refrigeration. This method relies on the use of terracotta or clay pots that are lined with sand and kept cool through the addition of water.

This method relies on evaporation and therefore only works in dry climates and it needs constant tending. This method of storage is best suited to places where electricity generation is not possible, such as selling locally grown produce at the market or in villages without refrigeration. The stored items should be consumed within a few days but the use of the pot-in-pot fridge helps to ensure that the goods remain in good, fresh condition during the time that they are stored and prevents decomposition during very hot weather. Fermenting and pickling. Vegetables can be kept for several months using fermentation or pickling.

Eggs can also be pickled to increase their shelf life. Pickles, sauerkraut and fermented soy bean curd are examples of such foods. On the downside, there is evidence that the acidic nature of pickled foods can lead to health problems if consumed too much. Refrigeration and freezing. Naturally this requires access to electricity-generated refrigeration systems but if you have this, it is one of the easiest methods to store food. There are many guidelines available on how long food can be stored in refrigeration or in a freezer and you will even find some of these guidelines in individual wikiHows on particular food items.

Downsides to this method include loss of food due to not knowing what is in your freezer or lack of dating items when you freeze them (thus necessitating throwing out items when you are not sure) and a tendency to over-stock refrigerators with food that goes off because nobody could consume it in time, or find it behind all the other food. Be vigilant in cleaning out the fridge weekly and the freezer monthly, so that you know what precious food you have stocked away. Chiller bags. Chiller bags or thermal lunch bags are great for short-term preservation of food.

Use them to transport food such as ice cream or other frozen products from the store to your home. Use thermal lunch bags to keep lunch cool during the morning until lunchtime. Neither of these options has a long duration of preservation; at tops usually about 3 – 4 hours. Thermos flask. A thermos flask is good keeping food such as tea, coffee, soup or even sausages hot or cold for a few hours. As with the chiller bag, this is a very short-term option but useful for school, work and day hikes.