

## *Frozen vegetables are year 'round favorites*

The 'just picked' flavour of Ontario frozen vegetables is cold-captured in the freezing process. They're almost as fresh as when they're newly harvested, right from the field.

The vegetables are harvested when their flavour and nutritional value are at their natural peak. They are then immediately rushed to nearby processing plants where they are sorted, cleaned and inspected before freezing. In preparation for freezing, most vegetables must be blanched and chilled. Blanching inactivates the natural enzymes in the vegetables, which are responsible for the ripening process, and is often done by steam. If left alone, the enzymes could cause further ripening and eventual deterioration of the vegetables, even while frozen.

For chilling and freezing, a combination of air circulation and cold temperatures are used to speed the extraction of heat from the fresh vegetables. The vegetables are then individually quick frozen (I.Q.F.) at -40°C. At this temperature most vegetables are completely frozen within a mere 25 minutes, depending upon their size and density. These I.Q.F. vegetables are maintained in bulk at -18°C, and are packaged on as the need arises. The packaging may consist of sterilized plastic bags or waxed cardboard boxes.

The preparation and freezing of Ontario vegetables are usually done within only six hours of harvesting. The speed and care with which these are accomplished are responsible for the excellent quality and nutritional maintenance of the fresh vegetables.

Indulge in the 'just picked' flavour of sun ripened vegetables; choose Ontario's own fresh-frozen vegetables.

### **Creamy Vegetables 'n Ham**

50mL 1/4 cup butter  
50mL 1/4 cup flour

500mL 2 cups milk  
184g 1 can (6.5 oz) flaked ham  
1mL 1/4 tsp dry mustard  
1mL 1/4 tsp dried thyme leaves  
125mL 1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese  
500mL 2 cups FROZEN MIXED VEGETABLES  
227g 1 package (8 oz) FROZEN ENGLISH MUFFINS

Melt butter in medium saucepan. Stir in flour and combine until smooth. Gradually stir in milk. Cook and stir over medium heat until thickened. Break ham apart with a fork, and add to sauce along with mustard, thyme, cheese and vegetables. Return to simmer and continue cooking, stirring frequently, for 8 minutes.

Toast English Muffins. Serve hot vegetable-ham mixture over hot buttered muffins. Makes 4 servings.

Variation - four FROZEN BAKED PATTY SHELLS may be substituted for FROZEN ENGLISH MUFFINS.

### **Quick Pea Soup**

30mL 2 tbsp butter  
2 medium onions, chopped  
1 clove garlic, chopped  
500mL 2 cups FROZEN PEAS  
284mL 1 can (10 oz) chicken broth  
1 soup can water  
2mL 1/2 tsp dried tarragon leaves  
dash 1/8 tsp pepper  
125mL 1/2 cup milk  
250mL 1 cup cubed cooked ham, optional

Sauté onions and garlic in butter in medium saucepan until softened, about 5 minutes. Add 375mL (1-1/2 cups) frozen peas, chicken broth, water, tarragon and pepper. Cover, bring to boil and simmer 10 minutes. In blender or food processor, purée soup in batches. Return to saucepan. Stir in remaining 125mL (1/2 cup) frozen peas. Simmer 5 minutes. Stir in milk and ham, if desired. Heat and serve. Makes 4 servings.

## **Ontario frozen food facts**

Ontario frozen vegetables are an important industry in this province. Here are some facts on this industry and the products:

- Freezing vegetables is a relatively new industry in Ontario; the first freezing plants opened in the late 1950's.
- There are 10 processors of frozen vegetables in Ontario. They are located throughout the province, close to the growing areas for the vegetables.
- Over 113 million pounds of vegetables are frozen yearly in this country, and Ontario accounts for more than 80% of this.
- Ontario freezes a great variety of vegetables, including sweet corn,

peas, beans, carrots, cauliflower, squash, lima beans, broccoli, mushrooms, and Brussels sprouts. These may be packaged individually, or in a variety of combinations.

- Sweet corn, peas and beans comprise the largest portion (88%) of Canada's frozen vegetables.
- The latest entries to the frozen vegetable category include international style vegetable mixtures, vegetable and pasta mixes, and vegetables frozen in a sauce.
- Ontario frozen vegetables for retail sale are packaged in plastic bags or cardboard boxes. The sizes range from 11 and 12 ounces to 2, 3-1/2 and 5 pounds.