

Every morning I'm startled awake by the sound of gunfire. Thankfully it doesn't take long for me to remember that it's just one of our resident keruru crash landing in a hugely overlaid cherry plum tree, resulting in hundreds of tiny bright red fruit smashing on to the tin roof of our garage. It's harvest season, and this year the cherry plum trees have gone nuts.

In generations gone by such abundance would have meant a house filled with the smell of bubbling jams, chutneys and various preserves, all in the interests of spreading the fruits of seasonal harvesting over the year. Luckily for me, some clever person invented the freezer.

Most fruits (except strawberries) freeze well in plastic bags or containers. If you want to avoid having a huge squashed mass of fruit, you can place them on a baking tray first, and freeze them without covering. This means the individual fruit will remain separate, and you can transfer them to a bag or container once frozen.

You can also cook the fruit first, which can make it easier to remove stones if there are any, and tends to mean it will take up less storage space.

To freeze vegetables, slice and then blanch (boil) them for one to five minutes. The cooking process then needs to be stopped in its tracks by plunging the blanched vegetables into ice-cold water (you could use a bowl containing water and ice cubes). Dry off the produce before storing in freezer bags or containers, ideally in portion-sized batches.

Blanching the vegetables this way ensures much of the original flavour and nutritional value of the produce will be retained, and they'll keep for a year or more. Herbs can be chopped up and frozen into ice cubes that can be dropped into recipes whole.

There are many other fun ways to preserve some of the growing season's generosity, such as flavouring oils or making your own fruit liqueurs. Yum.

Learning how to store food when it is abundant will save you money across the year and ensure you can still enjoy a variety of produce in the colder months when little is growing. If you would like to connect to someone locally to learn more you can contact SuperGrans on 474 0582.

And if you would like to share your abundance with others in need, please contact the lovely folk at the Neighbourhood Food Harvest project via email ourfoodnetwork@gmail.com.

Good Food Dunedin is a Dunedin City Council-led initiative, supported by individuals, communities, organisations and businesses who share a vision to transform Dunedin into a thriving, food-resilient city.