

Humid Climate Solar Food Dehydrator

I adapted a [design by Sue Robishaw](#) for a humid climate solar dehydrator using the two glass panels I use for my cold frame. It easily dries greens (I would never use any other method to preserve these -- so handy to crumble a handful of dried greens into a soup or stew) and herbs. I found some good directions of using blanching to prep bulkier vegetables for drying and will try that this year. The Instructable for my build is [here](#).

Quick notes on drying greens

- Any edible green can be dried: dandelion, garlic chives, herb leaves, lamb's quarters, spinach, chard
- tender leaves work best; remove any ribs (such as in chard) to compost, use in a stir-fry, or preserve separately
- layer the leaves one leaf deep; feel free to combine different leaves on the tray (I do my soup green mix this way!)
- if you start the drying early in the morning and there is a slight breeze with humidity less than 70%, you could have dried greens by sunset
- the leaves should be dry enough to crackle before putting them away in air-tight jars and storing in a cool, dark place
- if you pulverize the leaves into a powder, it will take a lot to fill a jar
- use in any soup or stew during the winter for a hefty dose of vitamin A and minerals

Quick notes on drying herbs

- Herbs will dry to a nice dark green (not a brownish-green)
- remove heavier parsley stalks and place the leaf bunches on the screen close together
- you can leave mint leaves on stems for ease of handling; strip the leaves off to pack away
- sage is a “dry” leaf and will dry quickly
- garlic chives preserve their flavour as they dry; regular chives do not
- generally leave herb leaves on their stalks and strip them off the dried stems to pack away
- best to fill a tray with one herb only (unless you're doing a “herbal blend”), as drying times will vary and it can be tedious to separate them for storage
- herbs I've dried successfully here in Peterborough: garlic chives, parsley, sage, oregano, basil, thyme, chive flowers, tarragon (but there is some flavour loss)

Quick notes on drying fruit leather

- I made a puree with almond meal, black raspberries, and apple sauce for a fruit leather
- I used silicon baking sheets to hold the leather – the puree needs to be thick to not flow off the sheets
- it takes 2 to 3 days to dry the leather – do it when a sunny spell is forecast
- the leather should no longer be tacky to the touch when it is done
- this leather didn't roll nicely because it had the meal and black raspberry seeds in it, so I tore it into pieces for storage

Quick notes on drying sliced tomatoes

- It takes 2 to 3 days to dry 1/4 inch tomato slices
- it is best to use a paste type tomato, slicing it across its length
- these are nice in soups and on pizza

Other things I've dried

- Solar baked granola ([recipe here](#))
- almond meal: this is the residue from making almond milk. I spread it on the nylon straining cloth (no-see-um tent mesh or fine mesh curtain) and dry it until brittle
- rusk: thin bread slices placed directly on the tray screen and dried

Some books

- [Mary Bell's Complete Dehydrator Cookbook](#) by Mary T. Bell. Good notes on what things you should pretreat (usually by blanching) before drying
- [Dry It--You'll Like It!](#) by Gen MacManiman. Out of print, but if you see used somewhere, good book to have and pick up
- A good selection of other books: [Amazon.com: Food Dehydration Books](#)