

---

## Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 106 Cold Storage & Dehydration

**Show Notes are at: [www.LivingHomegrown.com/106](http://www.LivingHomegrown.com/106)**

Theresa: This is the Living Homegrown podcast, episode number 106.

Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown podcast, where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, national PBS TV producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.

Theresa: Hey there, everybody. Welcome to the Living Homegrown podcast. I'm your host Theresa Loe, and this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without the farm, and that can mean preserving, fermenting, small space food growing, and just simple steps that you can take towards a more sustainable lifestyle. All the different ways that we can live closer to our food, even if we have little or no garden space at all. If you want to learn more about any of these topics or my online canning academy, or my membership site, just go to my website: [LivingHomegrown.com](http://LivingHomegrown.com).

Today, we're going to be talking about cold storage and dehydration, two different preservation methods, and I brought on author Barbara Pleasant, because she just wrote a book about preserving from the garden. Now, the book that she wrote is called Homegrown Pantry, and it caught my eye for obvious reasons. The title was, like, I'm like, "Oh my gosh. This is the perfect book for me to check out." And the subtitle is, "A gardener's guide to selecting the best varieties and planting the perfect amounts for what you want to eat year-round." Now, that is what makes this book so special. Because there are gardening books, and there are preserving books, and what Barbara has done is kind of melded the two together to tell us what are the best varieties to grow, how much to grow, and then once you grow it, what to do with it when you want to preserve it. That way you can eat locally all year long, even when the food is out of season.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about Barbara, because she's a very prolific writer, and I've been reading her for years and years, so I'm excited to have her on the show. Barbara Pleasant has been covering organic gardening and self-sufficient living for more than 30 years. A contributing editor to Mother Earth News, Pleasant has garnered multiple awards from the Garden Writers

---

Association, and the American Nursery and Landscape Association. She's written books on topics ranging from compost to weeds, including Starter Vegetable Gardens, The Complete Compost Gardening Guide, The Complete House Plant Survival Manual, Gardener's Bug Book, The Gardener's Weed Book, The Gardener's Guide to Plant Diseases, and Garden Stone. See what I mean? She writes a lot. Her columns and articles appear regularly in Mother Earth Living Magazine, and on websites, including GrowVeg.com. Barbara lives in Virginia, where she grows vegetables, herbs, and fruits along with a few chickens who all have names.

I think you'll really like Barbara. She's super sweet, and she is a wealth of information, and we're just going to focus on two different types of food preservation in today's interview. We're going to talk about cold storage, or what's also sometimes called dormant storage, and we're going to talk a little bit about dehydrating your produce. And as always, you can get more information in the show notes for this episode, and to get that, just go to [LivingHomegrown.com/106](http://LivingHomegrown.com/106). I will have information there about Barbara, her website, her books, and anything else that we talk about in this episode. Without further ado, here is my interview with Barbara Pleasant, the author of Homegrown Pantry.

Hey, Barbara. Thanks so much for coming on the show today.

Barbara: This is great. Thanks so much for inviting me.

Theresa: Absolutely. I am really thrilled that you're here, because I've been reading you for years, and years, and years. You're a very prolific garden writer, and I have many of your books, and I read your articles everywhere, and I just know my audience is gonna love your information. I'm excited to have you, and I guess we should start really by having you explain how you even got into garden writing in the first place.

Barbara: Oh, thanks, Theresa. You know, most of us have other careers before, that came before the ones we're in now. For me, I have a master's in social work, and it was too hard. I was working in child welfare, and it was so difficult. I think I maybe found comfort in gardening, and started vegetable gardening more and more. My dad was a gardener, so I kind of came by it naturally. But then I wrote an article on growing spinach for Organic Gardening Magazine, and they paid me money. The light bulb went off that I could do something different, and so it took several years of working up to it, but I've been a full-time garden writer for over 30 years now.

Theresa: Wow. Wow, I didn't even realize it had been that long, but that's probably why I feel like I know you, because I've been reading you for so long. I love the book that you just came out with. You have several books, which I mentioned in the introduction, but this one caught my eye, of course, because of the title,

---

Homegrown Pantry. As I got a copy and I started really diving into it, I loved how you talked about gardening but in relation to preserving, and I just thought, "No one really does that." You even recommend certain varieties for preserving and storage, all of that. What made you decide to write this book?

Barbara: Well, I had been lecturing to groups on a topic. I had called it the Pantry-Driven Garden.

Theresa: Love it.

Barbara: It was going over pretty well, and I remember one group I was talking with in Kansas. There was a lot of younger people were in the audience, and they were so hungry for this kind of information, where I'm not talking about becoming food self-sufficient. That's a little bit too much to take on in modern life, if you ask me. Rather, I want to grow the things that grow well and that store well, so that every day of the year I can eat from my garden at least something.

Theresa: Yes, exactly. Yeah, so that you're basically eating seasonally all year long, even when it's out of season, and that's great.

Barbara: Yes, and it's fascinating, because there's also a math side to it. How much to grow, what to do with it when you've grown it. But anyway, the group that I was talking with was so receptive to this information, and so excited, I said, "Well, I'm not going to hold back anymore." Because I had been concerned that I might be leading people down the primrose path, you know? Like to make this seem like it was just an easy thing you could do casually in your spare time. But it really is a lifestyle. Now, funny things have happened. The book has been quite successful in its first couple of months, and so now the question is, "Why else would you want to garden, if not for these reasons?" I was kind of stuck in an old model, and concerned that people would take on too much, when in fact they just want to take it on right, you know? That they want to garden, and they want to have extra and put it up properly.

Theresa: Absolutely. I agree with you 100%, and I think that's why your book is resonating so much with everybody, and I know will resonate with my audience, because they are mostly food gardeners. They are from beginner to advanced, and that's why the parts about which varieties to grow that really preserve the best, I was like, "Finally, someone has, you know, put that together." But you cover a lot in this book. You cover five different methods of food preservation. Canning, freezing, root cellaring, fermenting, dehydrating. Today, I thought we could focus more on cold storage, and the root cellaring portion of it, and drying, because I haven't covered that a lot in this podcast, so I know people are hungry for that. If we start with something, I guess we should start with cold storage, because it's such a simple process that allows you to store large quantities of produce. What sort of things do you like to save in cold storage?

- 
- Barbara: Well, first, I do not have a proper root cellar. I'm in the mountains of Virginia, where I suppose you could put in a root cellar, but it might not work so well. Instead, I do have a basement, and one of the reasons that I kind of emphasize things that are gathered in the fall when it comes to cold storage is, by that time the basement has cooled down as well. But there are so many things that all they need is cool, dry conditions. Winter squash is one. I still have butternuts downstairs from last year.
- Theresa: Oh, that's awesome.
- Barbara: I think they're edible.
- Theresa: Yeah.
- Barbara: And garlic and onions are very easy. The easiest of all is sweet potatoes. I mean, you do not even have to have a basement or anything. I store my summer regular potatoes under my bed, because it's cool and dark there. It's one of the coolest, darkest places in the house.
- Theresa: I saw that in the book, and I had to giggle, because I thought that's really great. That's an unused portion of our house that would be perfect for storing things like that.
- Barbara: Well, you know, and here, when you live in a warm climate where it gets very hot in the summertime, to talk about cold storage in the basement is something that doesn't really exist until late September or October. Until then, I dry more and more. You know, you asked about drying, and this time of year there are so many things that I'll stash in the freezer and then deal with it later.
- Theresa: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes. Absolutely. I do that too. Because you get busy this time of year.
- Barbara: Yeah. Now, with some ways of storing things, when you write a book, you're pushed to try everything that you hear other people say works. If somebody says this works, oh, you have to try that to see if it's going to work. Well, you know what works, is digging up a cabbage and putting it in a bucket with some soil, and just take off the outer leaves so it's like a cabbage sitting on a stem and roots. That thing will hold for a month.
- Theresa: Really?
- Barbara: Yeah. Yeah.
- Theresa: Wow.
- Barbara: Even under warm conditions. There are these old methods of ... I had done that

---

with Brussels sprouts, but I had never done it with cabbage. But boy, it's better than filling up your whole refrigerator with cabbages.

Theresa: Oh, yes, because they're quite large.

Barbara: I know. Over the years in different places, I've lived in North Carolina and I've lived in Alabama, and trying to find a way to store potatoes is such a challenge.

Theresa: One of the things that you mentioned in the book was using a cooler. If you live in a colder climate, you would take a cooler and kind of half bury it in the garden or outside. You have to bungee cord it shut so that the raccoons don't get into it, but you talked about that, and that's something that, see, here in California, I would never do, because we don't get ... Where I am in Los Angeles, we don't ever get cold for that. But I thought that was a really clever way to store something in a cold way.

Barbara: It is. It's a natural way to do it. I've also simply dug a hole. You know, like a 18 to 24 inch deep hole, put a fold of newspaper in the bottom, and then put potatoes, you know, just 10 pounds of potatoes, and then covered them up with soil. That will hold some potatoes for a good long time, because that's the potato's idea of a perfect storage place.

Theresa: Right, so you only have to worry more about, like, if critters are ... A boar or something finds it.

Barbara: Yes. Where I live, there are voles, V-O-L-E-S, and if they find them, then there would be little tooth marks where they had their dinner.

Theresa: Yeah, we don't want that.

Barbara: They would be under the bed.

Theresa: Yes, exactly. Okay, so if we want to do this inside, if we have a cold cellar, or a basement, or an unheated garage, that's a great environment. But you also talk about using an extra refrigerator for certain things, and that's something that I do, because up in northern California, my family has an apple orchard, and we do have an extra refrigerator because apples do like to have cold storage. They do very well that way, so we do store ... I mean, in the fall, that refrigerator completely fills up top to bottom with apples. That's always an option.

Barbara: Yes. I have apple trees. I know what you're talking about.

Theresa: Yeah, because they'll come on all at once, and we make tons of applesauce, and we can it, and we do a lot of dehydrated apples, but oh my gosh, there's just more than we can handle, so we do do cold storage, and it does work really well.

Barbara: One of the advantages of cold storage with apples is most varieties improve in flavor once they've been refrigerated for a couple of weeks. I know I have three apple trees, and the middle one, enterprise apple, changes from a ho-hum apple into the most delicious apple to eat raw.

Theresa: Yeah. It's almost like it develops like a fine wine, right? There's other layers of flavor that come in when you have the cold storage. I don't know the science behind that, but I have definitely noticed that with a few of our cider apples.

Barbara: Yeah, and another reason to have a special refrigerator, if you have a lot of apples, is if you were to put those into your regular refrigerator and also you have carrots, or parsnips, or other root crops, no matter what you do, those apples are going to overwhelm the gases in the refrigerator with ethylene gas and make your root crops soften.

Theresa: Ah, that's a really good point. Yes, absolutely. Well, okay. When we're harvesting something ... Like, let's talk about pumpkins for a minute, because I know you grow a lot of pumpkins. When we're harvesting something like that, sometimes there's a step to do, also with something like potatoes, where you have to cure the produce before you store it. Could you explain that?

Barbara: When curing pumpkins, all you want is for the rinds to be given plenty of opportunity to dry and get very hard. Some depends on your climate. If you were to live on a mountaintop in New Hampshire, you might be best to cure your winter squash or pumpkins in a high tunnel, or someplace that gets really warm. One of the things with pumpkins and winter squash is, you want to leave them on the vine as long as you possibly can. They've been out in the late summer sun quite a bit, and often don't need much. Depending on the weather, if they're just brought into a warm, dry room, that's all they probably need.

Theresa: Okay. I know in the book you talked about you also, when you do harvest them, you just wipe them down with like a damp cloth, and if they need to be cured or let the shell harden, you do that. But then you can just store them, like dry storage. You can just put them someplace where it's kind of cool and dry.

Barbara: Yes. I keep my whole pumpkins and winter squash in the basement, where it's probably in the 50s in the wintertime, unless we're heating it for some reason. But then I've had some sitting upstairs on the main floor, just sitting around as decorations, that until I composted them a couple of weeks ago, they were fine.

Theresa: Yeah.

Barbara: You know? Part of it is which varieties you choose. Of course, if you took a thin-skinned jack-o-lantern, it's going to just rot no matter what you do with it, because it's not been developed to be a storage pumpkin. Whereas my favorite

---

variety is called Long Island cheese, and ...

Theresa: That's a great name for a pumpkin.

Barbara: I know, and it's an open pollinated, and rather variable in appearance, but here's the good thing about it. It's the same species as butternut squash, which means it's almost immune to this pest called the squash vine bore, which east of the Rockies is a formidable pest that can really set back pumpkins and can kill summer squash outright. But you'll never see damage on something that's of the species *Cucurbita moschata*, which is Long Island cheese pumpkins, butternut squash, and lot of odd curly squash. But one of the things about the Long Island cheese is the flesh is actually sweet, so when you bake it, it has an entirely ... Almost a fruity character. I mean, I like all winter squash and pumpkins, and there's a continuum. You can grow too much, too many orange vegetables.

Theresa: Yes.

Barbara: I'll have to point that out as one of the hazards of growing a homegrown pantry, is you can really overproduce on sweet potatoes, pumpkins, winter squash, carrots. Okay, I'd rather have the carrots and the sweet potatoes, and the very best of the winter squash and pumpkins, but you can have too much.

Theresa: Yeah. Well, that's the same thing for me with tomatoes. I get crazy with tomatoes, but I can totally understand it happens with squash too, as there's so many to choose from, and you only have so much space. But I love that idea that you can just enjoy some. You know, your dry storage can just be in a cool, dry room of your house, so that you're getting to enjoy it. I have had butternut squash last for months, and months, and months. This variety, I put a little star next to it. I want to grow some of this Long Island cheese. That is the funniest name for a pumpkin, but that's really good. Sounds excellent.

Barbara: Another lovely one is the Australian variety jarrahdale, J-A-R-R-A-H dale, mostly because if you wanted to also eat pumpkin seeds, it has fat, shiny, pretty pumpkin seeds, not like you're going to find packaged. Those come from special varieties in which the flesh is terrible. You kind of have a choice. "Oh, I'm going to grow pumpkin seeds like, and press out pumpkin seed oil." Well, you're not gonna get an edible pumpkin that way. You're going to get great pumpkin seeds. But if you want an edible pumpkin with pretty good roastable pumpkin seeds, then the jarrahdale variety, which is also beautiful, is a wonderful choice.

Theresa: Excellent. Ah, I love that. Yes, because then you're getting to do both, and we only have so much space, so we want to have the most versatile produce we can. Well, while we're talking about pumpkins, just really quick, I know that a lot of my readers write in about getting powdery mildew with their pumpkins, and I know you, being the massive gardener that you are, you've dealt with that a lot,

---

and you even mentioned it in your book about a preventative that we can do. Could you talk about that for a minute?

Barbara: Yes. You want to talk about using milk for powdery mildew?

Theresa: Yes. Absolutely.

Barbara: If you catch it early ... For example, earlier this week, I weeded my summer squash, and one variety, some of the older leaves were showing spots of powdery mildew, so I caught it early. I clipped those leaves off and put them in the compost, where they will perish, because like other diseases, a live plant is required to keep it going. Now, I will spray the whole plants, both sides of the leaves, with a mixture of milk and water. Whatever kind of milk you have will do. We drink whole, organic milk, and so I will put about a half a cup of milk into a pump spray bottle, so that the solution is like one part milk to five parts water, something like that.

Theresa: Okay.

Barbara: It can be very approximate. It looks quite milky, and like I say, I'm just using a handheld pump spray bottle, and going and coating both sides of the leaves until it drips off. Now, what's happening is I'm staging a very quick, like a flash, antiseptic treatment on the plants. It's as if for two seconds, I sprayed them with hydrogen peroxide, which of course would make the leaves turn brown. We don't want to do that. But the milk does not, and there's also theories that some of the nutrients left behind on the leaf also help disrupt the powdery mildew fungus, which is an odd, odd fungus, because most of the diseases in the vegetable garden need wet conditions, whereas drier conditions and plant stress are major contributors to powdery mildew.

Theresa: Ah, okay. We spray this on, and it's every seven to 10 days?

Barbara: It depends on how much it's raining and what you see, because yes, I would say seven to 10 days is a wonderful interval to shoot for, and then watch it be one of those summers where it rains every day.

Theresa: Yeah. Right. Murphy's law.

Barbara: But now one thing to point out, it's not a cure as much as a preventative or deterrent, because young, vigorous plants of squash, and melons, and winter squash, they're all susceptible to powdery mildew, but as long as they're young and vigorous, they resist attack. Can we talk botany for a minute?

Theresa: Absolutely.

Barbara: The squash leaves, just like all plant leaves, have these little breathing holes,

---

stomata, that are constantly opening and closing, and they have important work to do. Powdery mildew fungus actually sinks its nasty little feet down into the holes so that the leaves can't function. Well, an older leaf that's tired can't really defend itself like a young leaf that's vigorous and new. Late in the summer, if you were to try this milk intervention with a plant that was pretty far gone with powdery mildew, you're really not going to see much response. Whereas if you see the first signs on a young and vigorous plant, you're likely to see a tremendous response, and protect the health of that plant for several more weeks.

Theresa: Ah, that's such a good explanation. Thank you for that. Let's move on. I love that you got to explain about the powdery mildew and we got to talk about pumpkins, but I'm going to steer us back here. Now that we've talked a little bit about the dry storage or root cellaring options that people can have, let's talk a little bit about dehydrating. One of the things you mentioned in the book is you recommend using a dehydrator for the best results, and I agree 100%. Yes, you can use some other things. You can try to do solar dehydrating, or the oven, but for really good results, you can use a dehydrator, and so I'd love to have you explain.

Barbara: Well, two things, you can control the temperature, and different things dehydrate best at different temperatures. One thing that people don't usually think about is a dehydrator is a dark environment, so the food's also being protected from light when it's in an electric dehydrator. A dehydrator is such a simple, simple thing. It's a little fan with a little heating element in a box.

Theresa: Yeah. That's it.

Barbara: And then that's all there is to it, so it's not like you can do a whole lot of things wrong. The next question people ask me is, "What kind do you have?" As if there's a magic type or model. I have a 20 year old Excalibur that is still going strong, because it's nothing but a fan and a heating element in a box. But when the photographers were here to shoot the photographs for the Homegrown Pantry, I borrowed one of my friends' Lunesco brand, the little white ones.

Theresa: One of those round ones? They're kind of ...?

Barbara: Yeah.

Theresa: Yeah, okay. Yep.

Barbara: I ended up keeping it for a week to play with it, and it was fun, and worked really well. It's not like you have to buy in big to get a dehydrator. I even use the dehydrator for herbs, rather than hanging them in bunches, because it preserves the color so much better, and gives much better results.

---

Theresa: Yeah. I have an Excalibur also, but one of the newer ones, but I kind of worked my way up to that. I didn't get an Excalibur because my smaller ones were not as good. It's that I started doing such big volume that I really felt like I needed something bigger. But the smaller, less expensive ones worked just as well. It was just that I really wanted to get another one, and so I decided to go big, but you don't have to have, you know, the top of the line, the Cadillac of dehydrators, to do this. I'm glad you said that. I agree 100% with that. What sort of things do you like to dehydrate?

Barbara: Well, I dehydrate more and more all the time. I used to can tomatoes and can tomato sauce, and I still do, but I know how much is enough for a year, and then I just dry the rest. Some of the tomatoes I grow specifically for drying, and to say that I just dry tomatoes is putting it too simply, because some, I will dry until they're very dry and hard, and those would be what most people would call dried tomatoes. Several quarts of those, I try, but also some of my more favorite things are what I call half-dried tomatoes, where I will take a small paste tomato, cut it in half, put it skin side down in the dehydrator, and dehydrate it about halfway. That concentrates the flavors, and also makes it into kind of a whole new animal that is the most wonderful thing to put on pizza or pasta.

Theresa: Ah. Then do you take it and put it in the freezer in that state?

Barbara: Yeah, then I freeze that. Half-dried things, or things that dry and still retain some moisture. For example, seedless grapes are wonderful to dry into your own raisins, but for best results, you want to stop when there are still little pillows of mushy juiciness, and they still hold so much water when they're at what I consider perfection that I will put them in a vacuum seal bag and put them in the freezer.

Theresa: Yes. My first experience with grapes, I dehydrated them a little too much, and they were like rocks.

Barbara: Yeah, they're hard, and you know, blueberries are kind of like that.

Theresa: Yes.

Barbara: I don't know that they're really worth drying, but some of the other things to ... Right now, I have lucked into some cherries, but instead of putting them right into the dehydrator, I will put them in the freezer sprinkled with a little sugar, the same way you might do strawberries that you were freezing to use as a dessert topping, and then I'll thaw out the sweetened, frozen cherries, and drain off the liquid, and put those in the dehydrator. It makes such a difference to have used the freezer. See, when you freeze something, cell walls burst from the freezing and then the thawing.

Theresa: Yup.

- Barbara: That preconditions some things for dehydration.
- Theresa: Yeah, would release its water a little bit better.
- Barbara: Right. "Okay, now I'm ready." And so you can go from the freezer to the dehydrator and get better results than if you had just dried the cherries straight up.
- Theresa: Right, and then you're also drying and then freezing, so we're kind of using two methods here which just extends the shelf life, and that's really fantastic. Something you said, though, a minute ago when you were talking about the varieties of tomatoes that you like to dehydrate, you said you like to do paste tomatoes as the half-dried variety. What variety do you like to use for drying hard?
- Barbara: Well you know, I think that is the best use for extra heirloom tomatoes, the big juicy tomatoes, that if you were to make those into a sauce, you're going to be heading toward a watery sauce, because that's what makes them taste so good. They have so much gel, and so much juice. If you do a sauce, it's not going to be the best sauce there ever was. If you, on the other hand, dehydrate those beautiful heirloom tomatoes, it's going to concentrate those flavors, and they can be dehydrated all the way to crisp. I put those in canning jars in the freezer, and just don't think about them. We go through, you know, like four quarts of those dried tomatoes. Just hard, dried tomatoes.
- Theresa: Yes, and I do a tomato powder, which I saw you had in your book too. I'll powder some of my dried tomatoes, and then I can use that as a flavoring as well. I'll be sure to link to a recipe for that. That's fantastic. I love that you're using the heirloom that way. I grow a lot of heirlooms, and I love to dry them, specifically because they have so much water in them. That's a great tip.
- Barbara: Yeah. Sometimes they turn funny colors, you know? You'll have like an heirloom that's yellow streaked with orange, and it will come out this color you never imagined once it's dried.
- Theresa: Yeah, but it still tastes good no matter what it looks like.
- Barbara: Well, a lot of times I'm using those dried tomatoes in soups, you know, or casseroles, or things that are going to cook for a while, and they're not going to really be recognizable by the time we're done.
- Theresa: Yeah. Yeah. Exactly, yeah. They just get thrown in. Now, although we dehydrate a lot of raw things like tomatoes or grapes, there's also some things that need to have a little treatment before we dehydrate. Why don't we talk about that? What are some examples of things that you dehydrate, but you have to do a

---

little something to them first before you put them in the dehydrator?

- Barbara: Well, I don't think there are really hard and fast rules, but one of the things I have found with vegetable after vegetable, that if you dry them raw, then it's kind of ... I'm going to use the word "cardboard." It's kind of a hard to chew, cardboardy thing. Let's just say zucchini, if you dried zucchini raw. Whereas if I were to just barely steam blanch it, I do believe that I'm fixing nutrients and enzymes to keep further deterioration from going on.
- Theresa: Yes, you absolutely are. Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Barbara: But then, the steamed slices of zucchini are going to accept a little salt and seasoning better than the raw ones would, and then you can tell I like to blanch my squash before I storing, and the same happens with green beans, which are an interesting thing to try, but if you try them without blanching them first, it's not an appetizing looking thing.
- Theresa: No.
- Barbara: And they take forever. On the other hand, if you were to use a spiralizer or a mandolin to cut things really, really thin, then drying raw is kind of fun.
- Theresa: Ah, yes.
- Barbara: How it takes no time at all.
- Theresa: Yeah, and they're uniform. It makes it dry a little bit more evenly.
- Barbara: Right. Right.
- Theresa: Yeah. Well, and then also there's things like apples, which you can pre-treat so they don't turn brown with like a lemon juice solution, or a vitamin C solution.
- Barbara: Right. Citric acid.
- Theresa: Yeah. In your book, you go through anything that ... Whatever it is that people are growing, and you've mentioned it in the book, you also give different ways to preserve. You always cite anything special or any little tips, and so that, I thought, was really fantastic. People kind of learn a little bit of the tricks for getting the best results.
- Barbara: You'd think that after a lifetime of doing this you know all of the ways there are to preserve things, but you don't.
- Theresa: No. No, you don't. Uh-uh (negative).

- 
- Barbara: I would never have imagined that fermented snap peas were, like, one of the best fermented foods I've ever had.
- Theresa: Really?
- Barbara: Really. They are that good.
- Theresa: Wow. Now, I have not fermented snap peas.
- Barbara: They're delicious, and as you can imagine, because they're so sweet, and the sugar converts during the fermentation process, so it's very quick. You know, like three to four days. Then I would not have imagined that drying cabbage would be worthwhile, but when there's 10 inches of snow on the ground and you're about to run out of food, and you can't go anywhere, boy, that dried cabbage came in really, really handy.
- Theresa: Did you do it as leaf? Leaf cabbage? Like, you took the leaf?
- Barbara: No. I cut it up very coarsely, and blanched it. I use a steam blancher most of the time, and just blanched it in steam until the color changed. Then it dried very quickly, and like many dried foods, I don't know how long it would have lasted, but it was pretty and it worked.
- Theresa: That's great. One of the things I know people wonder to do after they've dried all these things is storing it. We've talked a little bit about storing it in the freezer, so people can store things in freezer bags, or glass jars, but you had a really good recommendation about using small containers.
- Barbara: Well, you know, the less air that a frozen or a dried thing is exposed to, the better. Now, there are some things that are just so delicious dried. Maybe you've tried dried cantaloupe?
- Theresa: I have not had dried cantaloupe.
- Barbara: Oh, it's so good.
- Theresa: I'm gonna be doing it now, though.
- Barbara: You don't have to do anything to it. You know, just cut it into whatever pieces you want, and dry it straight up. But then if I were to put that, for example, in a vacuum-sealed bag, there's so much sugar in the dried cantaloupe pieces, they're just all going to stick together, and it's going to become a mess.
- Theresa: Okay. Yeah.
- Barbara: You know, what containers you choose depends kind of on what you're drying,

and how dry it is. You know, I live in this little country town, and we live in a canning jar economy around here. If you want to share something or save something, the first thing you do is reach for a canning jar.

Theresa: Yeah, absolutely. Using a smaller container is great because every time you open it, you kind of reintroduce the air, so you want to kind of use up ... Once you open it, you want to kind of use as much as you can as quickly as you can.

Barbara: I have found that the dried food is pretty forgiving about that, as long as you don't leave the containers open on a rainy day or something like that.

Theresa: Yeah, where it reconstitutes it. Absolutely. Of all the things that you dehydrate, what's your favorite?

Barbara: Oh my goodness. Well, I really couldn't get by in the kitchen without the tomatoes, because as you know, once you're used to having dried tomatoes, it's like when they're gone ... Which is kind of the goal, is to have everything gone at the end of the year.

Theresa: Yeah. I know.

Barbara: It's so sad when the last thing is gone.

Theresa: But it's so satisfying too, when it's wintertime and the tomatoes have been long gone out of the garden, but you still have those flavors. Yeah.

Barbara: One of the surprising recipes I have found in the last few years, and I put it in the book, and it's rhubarb that is cleaned into little sticks, as if they were little celery sticks, you know? Like I'd remove the strings, and cut them, and then with rhubarb, I like to pour some boiling water over the trimmed pieces, just to get rid of any excess oxalic acid that makes it extra, extra sour. Then, you soak those in some sugar for about three hours, which is really not very long. Drain those off and dry them, and in terms of rhubarb presentation, it's the least sugar recipe I've found that really tastes good. They're like sweet and sour candies.

Theresa: That's great. You just put them in the dehydrator and dry them, and then you pull them out and you can just chew on ... Like it's a straw?

Barbara: Right. Yeah, they're kind of sticky. They're kind of bendy, like ... I forget those candies. Twizzlers?

Theresa: Oh, yes. Yes. Uh-huh (affirmative).

Barbara: They taste like a sweet and sour ... Like a Sweet Tart.



*Live farm fresh without the farm®*

---

Theresa: That's cool. Oh, my kids would love that.

Barbara: They probably would. Like, we ate them all. They're gone.

Theresa: Ah. I'm going to give that a shot. We do have some rhubarb growing up in northern California, so I'm going to give that one a shot. That sounds really cool. Well, Barbara, I cannot thank you enough for coming on the show. I so appreciate you sharing your knowledge, and I'm going to really encourage everyone to go out and get your book. It's just a wealth of information, so thanks so much for coming on today.

Barbara: Well, thanks for inviting me. This has been too much fun.

Theresa: Well, I hope you enjoyed that interview with Barbara Pleasant, the author of Homegrown Pantry. Now, remember that everything that we talked about will be in the show notes for this episode. All you have to do is go to [LivingHomegrown.com/106](http://LivingHomegrown.com/106). I will have links to Barbara's website, her book, and I will also include a link to my tomato powder recipe if you want to learn how to do that. Thank you for joining me here today. I know how busy you are, and I really appreciate you taking the time out of your busy day to join me on this podcast. Until next time, just try to live a little more local, seasonal, and homegrown. Take care.

Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown podcast. Visit [livinghomegrown.com](http://livinghomegrown.com) to download Theresa's free canning resource guide and find more tips on how to live farm fresh without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown podcast.