



Sun-Drying & Dehydrating Safety Checklist

Everything you need to dry fruit safely — from first slice to last jar sealed.

⚠ Humidity Red Zone

When relative humidity climbs **above 60%**, moisture can't leave the fruit fast enough — mold takes hold within hours. On coastal and highveld days, always check your forecast before you slice a single peach.

1 Before You Start Preparation

- Choose ripe but firm fruit — overripe or bruised pieces spoil fastest.
- Wash gently in cold water. **Do not soak.**
- Peel, pit or core as needed. Slice evenly — ½ cm thick for peaches — so all pieces dry at the same rate.

Pre-treat to prevent browning: Soak in lemon juice solution (1 part juice : 4 parts water) for 10 min, or ascorbic acid, or blanch briefly.

- Use clean, food-grade mesh trays with airflow above and below.
- Cover with fine cheesecloth or netting. Elevate tray legs in water-filled cans to block ants.

2 Know Your Numbers Ideal Conditions

Minimum Temp
29–30°C
Ideally 35°C+ for faster, safer drying

Safe Humidity
< 60%
Hot, dry, breezy days only

Red Zone — Do Not Start
60%+ humidity
Switch to oven or dehydrator, or pause completely.

- Avoid cloudy, rainy, humid or still-air days entirely.

If humidity spikes mid-process » move indoors to a low-heat oven (57–63°C) or dehydrator immediately.

3 Daily Routine During Drying

- Place trays in full **direct sun** early morning.
- Turn slices every few hours for even drying.
- Bring indoors** every night — cool air and dew add moisture back and invite mold.
- Don't crowd trays.** Space between pieces is airflow.
- Peaches typically take **2–7 days** depending on conditions.

Warning signs — discard immediately: slimy texture, off smell, white fuzz, darkening spots.

4 Finishing & Storage After Drying

- Test dryness:** Cool a piece and cut in half — no moisture beads, pliable like leather (~18–20% moisture).
- Pasteurise (critical):**
Oven: 80°C for 30–60 min.
Freezer: -18°C for 48 hours.
- Condition:** Store in open jars 4–10 days; shake daily. Condensation = needs more drying.
- Seal in airtight glass jars or vacuum bags in a cool, dark pantry.
- Label with date.** Properly dried peaches keep 6–12 months.
- Check periodically. When in doubt, throw it out.

Quick Tips for Large Batches

Split your batches Large quantities (40 kg+) are risky all at once. Stagger start dates so you can monitor each batch closely.

Hybrid approach

Start in the sun, finish in a dehydrator. Gives you control when the weather turns — and it will.

Watch coastal weather

Humidity can jump fast — especially in Cape Town summers. Check the forecast the evening before, not morning.