

MAKING DRIED APPLE RINGS

This a guide for a super low-tech method for preserving an apple glut which lends itself to enterprise – why not sell apple rings to the wider school community?



Photo courtesy of Sue Todd, englishcountrycooking.co.uk

Making dried apple rings is an easy way to create cheap, delicious, fun and healthy snacks that children love! They are simple to make and a good way to preserve apples; kept in an airtight container they can last up to a year and take little space to store. Unlike apple desserts or chutney, this technique uses no extra sugar, yet they become perfectly sweet as the sugars in the fruit become concentrated. As an added bonus, you can use apples that aren't very nice to eat fresh – fluffy ones, old ones, sharp cookers etc. as the sugars become concentrated during the drying so they end up tasting great when dried!

This resource explains how to do it using two different methods; the oven or, simply, the classroom radiators as most schools won't have dehydrators (although a dehydrator may well be a good purchase if this is something you'd like to do frequently). Pupils can experiment with different flavours using easy to find spices.

Enterprise idea: Why not make this into an enterprise project – selling your own school branded apple snacks? Pupils could experiment with different apple varieties, flavours, and names, and design the branding and logos.

A note on drying: which ever method you use, this general rule applies: the drier you make the rings the longer they will last when stored. So, if you intend to store them for a long time then then it's best to err on the side of caution and make them drier – at this point you may decide to call them apple 'crisps' or 'chips' instead! Indeed their texture will be more similar to shop bought vegetable chips than the soft, pliable shop bought apple rings which have preservatives in them to keep them soft despite having a higher moisture content.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Apples! You can use apples that aren't very good to eat i.e. too fluffy, or super sharp cookers
- An apple slicer/corer/peeler ** or some sharp knives & chopping boards
- Garden mister (unused)*
- Lemon juice*

If using ovens:

- Deep baking trays
- BBQ skewers that sit across the width of the tray (see photos), or,
- Flat baking trays and grease proof paper or drying racks

If using radiators:

- String
- Garden canes (unused/clean) or metal clothes hangers
- Hot radiators

* Optional – the apples will brown naturally without lemon juice, some people prefer to prevent this

**These are wonderful little machines that make peeling and slicing a doddle and they never cease to completely amaze children of all ages (equally popular in secondary schools) and can be used to great effect in 'longest peel' competitions! You can find these online and John Lewis do a good one at the time of writing.

INSTRUCTIONS

APPLE PREPARATION

- **Slice the apples.** If using an apple slicer/peeler/corer read the instructions and proceed to process the apples. Having at least two of these allows for swifter slicing and peeling and will allow more pupils to have a go.
- If using knives, use the corer to core the apples first, then demonstrate safe knife use before allowing pupils to slice the apples width ways. The slices should be no thinner than ¼ inch (0.6cm).
- **To peel or not to peel?** Peeling is optional. Some people find that the skin becomes too tough after the drying process. Try some peeled and some unpeeled. Of course if you are using the slicer/corer/peeler then the decision is made for you!
- **Prevent browning.** Create a lemon juice solution by mixing ¼ cup (125ml) of lemon juice with 1 litre cold water. Use the sprayer/mister to spray each side of each slice with lemon juice to prevent oxidation and browning. Another option is to simply dip them into a jug of the lemon juice solution, or lightly salted water. Of course this step is optional – browning of the apple does not affect the flavour but some children find the appearance off-putting.
- **Flavour the rings.** This is also optional, though experimenting with different flavours can be fun. Spices to try include cinnamon, nutmeg, & chilli, but why not let the pupils experiment and come up with their own flavour ideas – their creativity is likely to result in some unlikely combinations!

OVEN METHOD



- Turn the oven onto a low heat.
- Thread the apple slices onto the BBQ skewers so that the slices aren't touching. This allows many more slices to go into the oven at a time when compared to laying them out flat onto a tray. Any rings that don't sit properly without falling off can be skewered into position.
- Gently position the skewers across the deep baking tray/s width ways so that the ends rest on the lips/edges of the tray with the rings suspended in air (see photo).

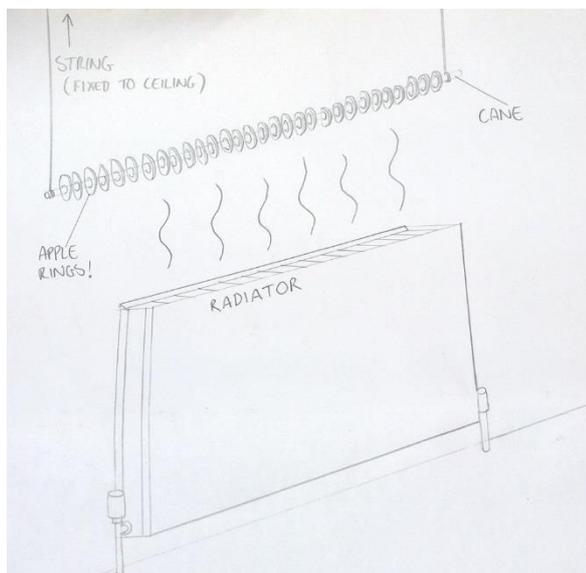
- Put the tray/s into the oven.

- Leave for 1.5 to 5 hours, depending on how chewy or crispy you like them (try one every now and then after the first 1.5 hours). The time they take depends on the water content of the apples and how well the air is able to circulate around the slices. This drying process can be split over several days if you don't/can't run the oven for this long in one go. Remember, the drier you make the rings the longer they will last in storage as moisture can lead to mould.

Alternatively you can lay the slices onto drying racks and put these into the oven, or onto baking trays lined with baking paper, although the latter will require the slices to be turned every now and again.

RADIATOR METHOD

Around about the time you're likely to get your hands on a lot of apples is usually the time the school radiators tend to get turned up! Take advantage of this heat by using it to dry your apples. Prepare fruit as above.



- Thread your apple slices onto an unused garden cane lightly oiled with cooking oil. Ensure that there is at least 2 cm spacing between each ring.
- Tie each end to some string and then pin, stick or tie these ends to the ceiling above a radiator, so that the cane hangs horizontally above the radiator (see diagram). Note: this doesn't necessarily be above a radiator – hang them anywhere in a room that gets very warm daily and they should be dried by between 2-5 days.

STORAGE

The apple rings **must be allowed to cool to room temperature** before storing to prevent condensation and moisture so that they do not rot. Also, it is important to ensure that they have properly dried out otherwise they'll go mouldy and your efforts will have been wasted.

They can be put into zip-lock freezer bags or airtight Kilner jars and stored somewhere dark and cool, this way they should last for up to a year if dry enough.