

How to dry orange slices

The Orange

Make sure your orange is in good condition i.e. no bruises and not too ripe.

Slicing

You will need a very sharp large knife for the best results. I always sharpen my knife before starting. VERY carefully make slices about 0.25 to 0.5 cm thick, trying to keep an even thickness throughout the slice.

Pre drying

Dab off any extra juice from each slice with kitchen paper.

Drying – Aga, solid fuel burner method

This is the easiest and most effective method that I have tried. I dry all my fruit on my solid fuel burner. Place slices onto a cake rack, so they are evenly spaced, i.e. not overlapping. Leave on top of your Aga / solid fuel burner in the hottest place. Do not let the orange slices touch the stove; you need to have air underneath the cake rack. They will take about a day to dry, depending on temperature, humidity etc. Check the progress once an hour.

Drying – oven method

I have only tried this with an electric oven, so if you have gas let me know what happens!!!!

Place slices onto a cake rack, so they are evenly spaced, i.e. not overlapping. Heat oven to its lowest heat setting i.e. about 50°C or equivalent. Place the cake rack of range slices onto the middle shelf of your oven and 'bake' for about 6 hours. You need to keep checking every half hour or so to make sure they are not burning, if they are, the oven temperature is too high. You may need less or more than 6 hours, depending on the type of oven you have and the thickness of your slices.

Drying – Microwave method

This is a good method if you want to dry slices quickly, but it's a lot of work and you can use a lot of kitchen paper. Place four or five slices between layers of kitchen paper (non coloured) and microwave at 50% power for about 8 minutes. Then remove wet kitchen paper and replace with dry paper and microwave again, keep checking to make sure marks don't appear on slices. Remove when nearly dry and finish drying off on a cake rack in a dry place e.g. airing cupboard.

For a very useful book on the subject of microwave drying, see 'Nature Crafts with a Microwave' written by Dawn Cusick.

Storage

If you are not using your orange slices straight away, store them in a box or tin (to stop any bugs getting at them) with a moisture absorbing substance, e.g. silica gel crystals. This will stop them going moldy. I use Bouchard Humidity Absorbers, which are a plastic box containing crystals. You can buy them from Lakeland or in most large supermarkets, usually near the air fresheners.