<dryingMethod>Dry peppers can last from several months to a few years if stored properly. Just note that thinner skinned peppers are better for drying. Below I offer several ways you can dry your peppers along with ideas of what do to with them once dried.

Before drying your peppers, always wash them with warm water and dry thoroughly with a towel.

DRYING HOT PEPPERS INDOORS

This is my preferred method just because it’s simple and I grow a lot of small, thin-skinned red peppers like Pequin, Tabasco, Thai Peppers and Firecracker Cayennes. The photo above is from the latest harvest from some of those plants. I dried and then coarsely blended these into some REALLY hot red pepper flakes. 🔥

If you’re not really in a big hurry for your dried peppers, just place whole or sliced chile peppers, single-layer, on a plate or baking sheet and set them in a very dry, warm area with loads of sunlight. Under a window should work best. If your peppers are a little larger, place them on a cooling rack while drying so they have air circulation all around. These peppers can also be moved outside to bask in the sun for a bit on hot and sunny days.

I only dry small peppers with thin flesh, and I cover mine with a paper towel just so they don’t get dusty. If drying larger peppers, I cut off the stems to expose the inside to allow the pepper to dry out more quickly.

Thicker skinned peppers (like Jalapeños) have a greater chance of rotting before drying out. For these types of peppers, you can slice them in half. Be sure to rotate the peppers regularly and discard any that show signs of softness or spoilage. Within a week or two, your peppers should get dry and brittle.

DRYING PEPPERS OUTDOORS

Similar to drying indoors, place whole or sliced chile peppers single-layer on a plate or baking sheet and set them outside when you have consistent hot and sunny days. Make sure they are in an area that gets lots of sunlight. If you’ve sliced the peppers, you can place a screen over the sheet or plate to keep out insects.

You can also make a strand of peppers by hanging them from a string. Start with whole peppers with stems still on. Thin-skinned peppers work best. Take a long needle and, using a strong thread or fishing line, string them together through the stems. Keep about an inch or so between each pepper for airflow. Tie a toothpick or small stick on each end to keep the peppers from sliding off. Hang them horizonally in an area that receives lots of sunlight and fresh air.

DRYING PEPPERS IN THE OVEN

For a quicker method, you can dry your peppers in the oven. The peppers may take several hours to fully dry, depending on the size. Larger, thicker-skinned peppers will take longer to dry than smaller or thin-skinned chiles. Cut your peppers in half or quarters so the flesh is open and dries out faster. Place the peppers seed side up on a parchment-lined cookie sheet in a single layer. Bake at 125 degrees F (or your lowest setting) for several hours. To allow moisture to escape, keep the oven door slightly open at least a couple of inches. Every hour, rotate and/or flip the peppers over for even drying. Keep a very close eye on them and remove those that are well dried. Also do your best to keep thee peppers from burning. If you find peppers getting soft, brown-to-black, or extremely hot on the side where they touch the pan, then they’re getting cooked. and you’re trying to avoid this.

DRYING PEPPERS IN A FOOD DEHYDRATOR

This is the quickest and easiest way to dry hot chile peppers if you have a food dehydrator. If your peppers are medium or large in size cut them length-wise and place them on the dehydrator’s tray with plenty of space around each piece for good airflow. Smaller peppers (1 inch or less in length) can be left whole to dry.

If your dehydrator has a temperature setting, place it between 135 and 145 degrees. Let the chiles lay in the dehydrator for 8 to 12 hours, checking every so often to see if the smaller or thinner pieces have dried out. Larger pepper pieces may take a few additional hours to dehydrate. The peppers are done once they dry and become brittle.

I HAVE DRIED THE PEPPERS– NOW WHAT?

There are many uses for your dried peppers!

Finely grind any dried hot pepper into a powder using a food processor, blender, coffee grinder, or spice mill.

Coarsely grind dried red peppers into red pepper flakes. So much hotter and more flavorful than store bought pepper flakes!

Store them in a Ziplock bag. You can rehydrate peppers or used them dried in any recipe.

Create your own spice blend to give to family and friends as gifts so that they can spice up their own recipes!</dryingMethod>