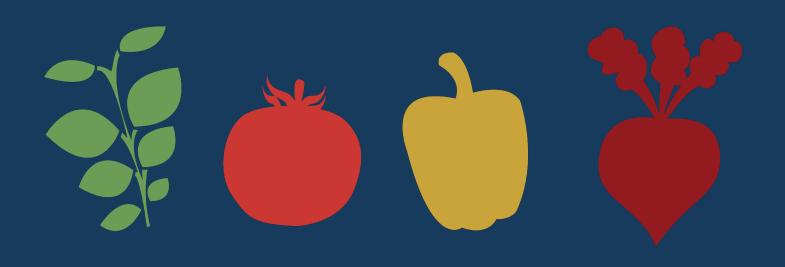
FARM - TO - FREEZER

AN INSTITUTIONAL GUIDE TO SAVING SUMMER'S BOUNTY



RALPH W. VOORHEES PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWS

ABDUL ABAD KEVIN DAHAGHI KATHERINE FUDACZ ERIN MAGUIRE SARTHI TULI

WITH

ARIELLE WORTZEL

STRUCTOR

KATHE NEWMAN

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR

RALPH W. VOORHEES CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

EDWARD J. BLOUSTEIN SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND PUBLIC POLICY

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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Many thanks to Elijah's Promise's staff members who shared their time and expertise, especially

Gabby Aron, Community Support Agriculture (CSA) Coordinator

Chef Chrissy Banks, Baking and Pastry Program Manager and Admissions Counselor

Anthony Capece, Urban Agriculture and Food Systems Coordinator

Chef Carol Eggleston, Promise Catering Chef Manager

Lisanne Finston, Executive Director

John Milano, Purchasing Agent/Steward

Tony Nunno, Volunteer and Donations Coordinator

Chef Pearl Thompson, Director of the Promise Culinary School

Chef Rachel Weston, Special Projects Coordinator

A special note of thanks to Lisanne Finston as she heads off on a new adventure. Lisanne's commitment to education and public service inspires many others to fulfill their dreams. She believes that her generation's ceiling should be the next generation's floor and she encourages and challenges everyone around her to dream bigger. Lisanne Finston will be truly missed. To Lisanne, we wish you the joy and fulfillment of your heart's desires.

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FREEZING FARM FRESH FOOD

The 2013-2014 Ralph W. Voorhees Fellows worked with Elijah's Promise, an organization that seeks to improve community food security and reduce poverty by "harnessing the power of food to change lives". Elijah's Promise asked the Fellows to create a guide to illustrate how Elijah's Promise processes and freezes fresh food. Elijah's Promise freezes fresh food for a few reasons: to save money by extending the life of lower cost and sometimes free summer produce, control food quality, to provide organizational flexibility, to enhance job training efforts, and to build a connection with farmers.

Elijah's Promise is not alone in its farm-to-freezer efforts. Many non-profit organizations process fresh produce. Corbin Hill Road Farm, in New York, freezes food from their farmers markets and provides produce and spices to families in the South Bronx and Greater Harlem (Corbin Hill Road Farm, 2013). Goodwill Industries, in Michigan, trains people with physical and mental disabilities for food industry jobs through gleaning, processing and freezing (Goodwill Industries, 2013). Sustainable Nantucket elementary school, in Massachusetts, teaches children about food by incorporating locally grown food into cafeteria meals by gleaning, processing and freezing food (Sustainable Nantucket, 2013). At Green Mountain

College, students learn about agriculture, microeconomics, supply chain management and public policy through service learning participation in gleanings and freezing (Agency of Agriculture and Food Markets, 2013). Bethesda Cares, in Washington DC, runs a volunteer farm-to-freezer project to provide local fresh food in the winter. Volunteers collect about 300 to 400 pounds of food weekly from June to November, process the produce at churches with commercial kitchen space and store the food in zip lock or vacuum bags. The organization prepared more than 1,500 pounds of produce and served meals to 2,500 homeless people in its first year. It also incorporated a cooking program to help those transitioning into jobs (Bethesda Cares, 2013).

To understand the nuances of the costs and benefits of freezing, in the next section we turn to an in-depth discussion of how and why Elijah's Promise processes and freezes food. We explore their freezing process including where the food comes from, who does the work of freezing, how food is stored and what equipment are needed, and how that food is used. Following is a discussion of the costs and benefits of freezing food. Elijah's Promise saves money but the benefits to freezing summer produce far exceed the dollars saved.







ELIJAH'S PROMISE - FOOD CHANGES LIVES

"Harnessing the power of food to break the cycle of poverty, alleviate hunger and change lives." (Elijah's Promise, 2013)

Food is a tool to lift people out of poverty for Elijah's Promise. As Executive Director Lisanne Finston explains, "There are certain moral responsibilities of society to address fundamental needs; as a society, having adequate, safe, culturally appropriate food to eat is a right, not a privilege" (Finston, 2012). Three churches, St. John's Episcopal, Emanuel Lutheran and Christ Church Episcopal formed Elijah's Promise as a soup kitchen in 1989. After watching the same people visit the soup kitchen, Elijah's Promise created a state-certified vocational culinary training school, which has graduated 700 students, to address poverty. Chef Pearl, the schools' instructor explained that: "While people come from different circumstances, food is what we all have in common. It is our human commonality." Elijah's Promise complements job training with job search assistance and its own Promise Catering social enterprise, which provides 70,000 affordable quality meals annually, employs eight Elijah's Promise graduates and two formerly homeless soup kitchen customers. Elijah's Promise has since expanded to include community gardens, a pay-as-you-can cafe, community supported vegetable, fruit and bread shares, and is a vital partner in New Brunswick's food policy council.



ELIJAH'S PROMISE THROUGH THE YEARS

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program begins. Sustainable Cooking courses begin to train community members and chefs

New Brunswick Community Food Alliance established to create partnerships for healthy foods

 $\label{eq:community} \mbox{ Community Supported Bread (CSB) program and Baking and Arts program begin}$

Shiloh Garden, a 40-bed community garden established

Better World Cafe opens using a pay-as-you-can model

Shift to healthy foods

Promise Catering begins and now serves more than 70,000 meals annually

Culinary Arts Job Training program begins. Turnaround to break cycle of poverty begins

St. John's Episcopal, Emanuel Lutheran, and Christ Episcopal Churches form Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen

ELIJAH'S PROMISE - FOOD CHANGES LIVES

FREEZING FARM FRESH FOOD

While Elijah's Promise has bee providing healthy food since its founding, it ramped up its efforts to incorporate fresh produce about ten years ago. Lisanne Finston, Elijah's Promise's director, explained the moment that inspired the change:

"A Mexican woman walked into my office one day with her four-year-old son. She plopped the bag of food she had gotten from the food pantry onto my desk and began taking out items from the bag. This woman showed me that her son had diabetes and could not eat anything from the bag...That day I learned that something is not always better than nothing. People, regardless of who they are, deserve healthy, wholesome, nutritious food. Ever since that day, we have tried to find new ways to get more healthy options into the meals Elijah's Promise provides. The story of the Mexican women is from ten years ago...I was was given a game changing moment when I was faced with that desperate mother, and I, and my organization, decided to change" (Finston, 2013b)

Since that watershed moment, Elijah's Promise has transitioned into a comprehensive community food organization that celebrates fresh food, has perfected techniques for freezing, to make the most of often-free and lower cost fresh summer produce, and incorporates fresh food into job training, community economic development, and improved food security. It incorporates local, fresh/frozen produce into meals at A Better World Café, Meals-on-Wheels, Bates House, a homeless men's shelter, and Tiny Tots, a local preschool.



ELIJAH'S PROMISE - FOOD CHANGES LIVES

PROCESSING FRESH PRODUCE

Turning fresh produce into a frozen product is more difficult than it sounds especially when that fresh produce often arrives at a moment's notice in varying quantities. Elijah's Promise gets fresh produce from a variety of sources some of which is free and some they purchase. Elijah's Promise receives donated food from farms, a regional food bank, gleaning programs such as Farmers Against Hunger, Elijah's Promise's gardens, CSA shareholder donations, the Rutgers Student Farm, the New Jersey Agricultural Extension Earth Center, and restaurants. It buys produce from the New Brunswick Farm Markets, food distributors, regional food bank, farms, Tri-county Market, and retail stores (See Figure 4).

- Gleaning New Jersey Farmer's Against Hunger gleans
 excess produce and redistributes it to soup kitchens,
 churches and food pantries around the state.
- Regional Food Bank Elijah's Promise purchases and receives donated food through the Hillside Food Bank some of which comes from Farmer's Against Hunger.
- Rutgers Student Farm and the New Jersey Agricultural Extension (NJAES) - The Rutgers student farm and the NJAES Earth Center grow food for Elijah's Promise.
- CSA shareholder donations Approximately six-to-ten of Elijah's Promise's CSA members donate their share each week.

- Elijah's Promise's Gardens and other Community
 Gardens Elijah's Promise receives garden donations
 from area community gardens and grows herbs outside
 its offices.
- New Brunswick Farm Market Elijah's Promise buys
 produce from two farmers that participate in the New
 Brunswick Farm Market. Johnson and Johnson makes
 these purchases possible to ensure that the market has a
 diverse group of farmers.
- Stores, Tri-County Market Food Hub, and produce distributors Like many other institutions, Elijah's Promise also purchases produce from stores and distributors.



Elijah's Promise staff pick up donated food from farms, food banks, community gardeners and farm markets, often with a moment's notice.

To use fresh often-donated food from gleaning groups and or the regional food bank, that often arrives in unexpected amounts at unexpected times, Elijah's Promise has developed a flexible approach that is grounded in staff communication and experience to know what different areas of Elijah's Promise need and can use at different times. This involves excellent communication and planning, small batch trials, and a compendium of well-tested recipes. Throughout the growing season, Elijah's Promise staff map the inflow of products to ensure adequate staff and capacity to process. John, Elijah's Promise's buyer, is a proactive, creative, liaison between Elijah's Promise and the regional food bank. His specialized knowledge and proactive planning contributes to Elijah's Promise's catering and freezing success. He works with the chefs to plan how to incorporate produce. For example, if he picks up tomatoes and eggplant, this will affect menu planning for catering, Meals-on-Wheels, Tiny Tots, Bates House and the soup kitchen. If he knows the chefs are teaching a knife skills class, he might pay special attention to getting produce that needs to be chopped, like carrots.

Elijah's Promise has tested recipes in small batch trials in which they process, freeze, and check product quality over time. They tweak recipes that don't turn out as expected. Some types of produce like eggplant have a lot of water and need to be cooked before freezing but other foods have less water and can be frozen after a quick shock. From their trials, Chef Rachel assembled a recipe book which enhances their ability to handle a variety of fresh products. Tomatoes, corn and eggplants, prolific during summer months, are three of Elijah's Promise's chef's favorite ingredients. When 100 pounds of eggplant is available, Elijah's Promise has a dozen previously tried strategies for freezing and storing it. Chef Carol explains, "we have such an abundance of eggplant, and so many ways we can use it!"

PEANUT STEW (VEGAN) Makes 3 Gallons

Inspired by a traditional African stew

6 cloves garlic-minced

6 white onions- sliced thin

3 cups peanut butter

3 #10 cans crushed tomatoes or 3 bags frozen tomatoes processed by EP

3 cans coconut milk

1/2 tsp cayenne pepper

finely chopped cilantro- leaves and stems salt and pepper to taste

Slice onions in robo coupe.

Sweat onions and garlic.

Work in peanut butter.

Add tomatoes. Bring to boil, reduce to simmer.

Add coconut milk, cayenne and chopped cilantro

Season with salt and pepper.

This should be a thick, creamy stew.

Use immersion blender to even out tomatoes and onions.

Add vegetable stock to thin out as necessary.

ELIJAH'S PROMISE - FOOD CHANGES LIVES

CAPONATA

2 large eggplants

1 onion

4 cloves garlic minched

2 stalk celery, sliced thinly

1 red pepper, diced

2 Tbsp tomato paste

2 tomatoes, diced

1/4 cup raisins

1 Tbsp capers

1/2 cup pitted green olives

1/2 cup red wine vinegar

2 Tbsp sugar

3 tbsp olive oil

Prick the eggplants 6-8 times all over and char them over an open flame on the gas stove, under the broiler or on the grill. The skins should blacken and smell smoky.

Transfer to a baking pan and bake at 500 degrees for a 20 minutes until completely softened.

Cool.

Scoop flesh into a food processor. Discard skins.

Pureed until smooth.

Add rest of ingredients except herbs and puree.

Taste and adjust seasoning for salt and pepper or more lemon juice if needed.

Before serving drizzle with olive oil and herbs.

*may be made 3 days in advance of serving.





PROCESSING FRESH PRODUCE CONTINUED

Chef Chrissy added, "One time at a processing party, we did eggplant nine different ways. It is fun to experiment and see how many different things I can do with one product" like eggplant parmesan, chutney, cutlets, soups and stews. Elijah's Promise uses tomatoes in a seemingly endless array of meals. Chef Vito's favorite tomato recipes are: chocolate chipotle, chili cream of tomato soup, African peanut stew, and meatball subs. Chef Rachel loves corn: "Corn is easy to process and it tastes so fresh when we take it out of the freezer. Meals-on-Wheels can provide corn chowder in January with fresh corn that was stored from the summer. It tastes so much better than canned or commercial corn" (Interviews, 2013).

WHO PROCESSES?

Labor is a vital concern for organizations interested in processing and freezing fresh produce. The cost and type of labor determines how net income gets distributed, how tasks get completed, and how fast an organization grows. Elijah's Promise relies on its robust volunteer network and turns volunteering into fun at processing parties. Elijah's Promise incorporates volunteers and a twenty-five member staff, one of whom is responsible for coordinating volunteers. Volunteers register online selecting times and dates and sign-in on-site to confirm attendance, but there is no guarantee that volunteers will attend. Tony Nunno, Elijah's Promise's volunteer and donations coordinator, works directly with large groups of eight or more people, some of whom volunteer regularly or for longer periods of time such as over the summer. Volunteers may sign up for shifts permanently. For example, on Mondays and Tuesdays, there are three permanent volunteers. On Wednesdays and Fridays, the dinner shift has six to eight permanent volunteers. Thursdays have no permanent volunteers. Elijah's Promise used to have larger scale shifts but as people grew more efficient, group sizes got smaller. Volunteers enable Elijah's Promise to save money.

Relying on volunteers reduces labor costs but volunteers may not show up, even when they sign up for volunteer shifts. Flexible staff members, willing and able to respond to changes as they arise, are necessary. Despite the costs of volunteer labor, Elijah's Promise's volunteers expand the base of community support for Elijah's Promise by making its mission and work more readily transparent. Word-of-mouth publicity builds a broader base of supporters, which further expands the capacity of Elijah's Promise to deliver food and services to those in need.

People of all backgrounds and ages volunteer at Elijah's Promise; some tasks, such as kitchen work, are agerestricted for safety. "There is something for everybody, and everybody can be involved in the work of ending hunger" (Elijah's Promise). Volunteers might sweep the kitchen

BABA GANOUSH

2 large eggplant

3 Tbsp tahini

juice of 1 lemon 3 cloves garlic minced

pinch of chili powder

1 Tbsp olive oil

1/4 cup parsley or cilantro

Prick the eggplants 6-8 times all over and char them over an open flame on the gas stove, under the broiler or on the grill. The skins should blacken and smell smoky.

Transfer to a baking pan and bake at 500 degrees for a 20 minutes until completely softened.

Cool.

Scoop flesh into a food processor. Discard skins.

Pureed until smooth.

Add rest of ingredients except herbs and puree.

Taste and adjust seasoning for salt and pepper or more lemon juice if needed.

Before serving drizzle with olive oil and herbs.

*may be made 3 days in advance of serving.

ELIJAH'S PROMISE - FOOD CHANGES LIVES

ROASTED EGGPLANT WITH GINGER HONEY DRIZZLE

1 eggplant

1/4 cup vegetable oil

1 Tbsp grated fresh ginger

1/4 cup warmed honey

1 tsp red pepper flakes

1 Tbsp pomegranate molasses

zest of 1 lime

Slice eggplant in 3/4 in rounds

Oil a baking sheet and arrange rounds on top. Salt and pepper eggplant

Bake at 425 degrees for 25-30 minutes. Turn eggplant half way through cooking time. The slices will be soft and browned.

Combine the rest of the ingredients in a small bowl to make the sauce.

Drizzle honey sauce over eggplant prior to serving.



WHO PROCESSES CONTINUED

space, clean stoves and ovens, glean produce, prepare and/or serve food, and reorganize storage space. Elijah's Promise's Volunteer Manual shares its history, mission, and need for volunteers. Volunteers weigh the opportunity costs associated with wageless labor and the social benefits which include emotional satisfaction, a sense of moral obligation, and a desire for community. Volunteers can visualize their work as benefitting those who are food insecure. Such experimental learning affords opportunities for hands-on learning and first-hand exploration of Elijah's Promise's history and mission and its work as a social enterprise.

Volunteering may boost human capital by building skills and networks which can translate to employment prospects and increased earnings (Day and Devlin, 1998). Volunteering, cleaning, processing, or learning, builds interpersonal and communication skills. The Culinary School teaches food processing and distribution skills. Events such as "processing parties" teach food preparation skills. Volunteers engage with tasks that require collaboration and on-the-job training. Staff ensure proper procedures are followed to protect the food and equipment quality. Volunteers with more experience take on more complicated tasks and are supervised less, allowing staff to focus on other tasks. The fast-paced, flexible nature of Elijah's Promise's work prepares volunteers to be adaptable under rapidly changing circumstances.

Many of Elijah's Promise's volunteers are Rutgers students, staff, and/or faculty. Students involved in community service-based organizations, faith-based organizations, Greek organizations (fraternities and sororities), and service-learning courses may volunteer to fulfill service requirements and/or their commitment to the New Brunswick community. One group of students describes volunteering for Elijah's Promise as an act of reaffirming their friendships with each other through meaningful activity (Nunno, 2013). Anecdotal evidence provides the clearest picture of the motivations and values of volunteer labor for volunteers.

In their experience of processing foods for Elijah's Promise, two student Voorhees Fellows describe their volunteer experience.

"On two occasions, we volunteered to process tomatoes at Elijah's Promise. Elijah's Promise intern Gabby Aron welcomed us into the kitchen. Her sunny, kind disposition is infectious! After washing our hands and putting on aprons, we carried crates of tomatoes from the refrigerator and poured them into colanders for washing. Gabby demonstrated how to properly use a knife to core tomatoes, taught us to cut off bruises, and told us to throw scraps into a compost bucket. After processing, we cleaned the kitchen, put away utensils and stored the tomatoes in the refrigerator. We both enjoyed the experience of processing tomatoes for we were in great company! The first time we volunteered, there were six Rutgers students and the second time, there were four volunteers, two of whom were Elijah's Promise culinary students. We learned a great deal about our peers' interests, cultures/traditions and reasons for volunteering. Volunteering at Elijah's Promise helped us feel connected to food and the New Brunswick community."

EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Equipment and facilities are a necessity for an organization that wants to freeze farm fresh food. Commercial kitchens, equipment, and freezer space is essential to safely and efficiently process food. Elijah's Promise has multiple commercial kitchens and processes most of its produce at the culinary training school which includes a commercial kitchen, garden, and administration offices. The soup kitchen includes a commercial kitchen, storage, office, conference room, and has a raised-bed community garden. A soon-to-be launched community kitchen incubator will include a bakery, commercial kitchen, and retail. In its kitchens, Elijah's Promise has basic equipment including colanders, towels, cutting boards, knives, sink, buckets, compost bowl, compost system, place to store unprocessed food, place to store processed food, and freezing containers and bags. Elijah's Promise installed a 25-gallon steam kettle to facilitate processing that it received in a trade with a church that was in need of chickens. Elijah's Promise's costs included an electrician and plumber to install the kettle which saved about \$4000 to 5,000. The kettle enables Elijah's Promise to dramatically increase production from 3,000 gallons of tomato sauce a summer to 3,000 gallons of sauce in a day and a half. The kettle is currently the most valuable piece of processing equipment Elijah's Promise owns.





ELIJAH'S PROMISE'S FREEZING EFFORTS COSTS & BENEFITS

EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES CONTINUED

Freezer space is also important. Elijah's Promise has freezer space at its culinary training center. It also pays \$90 per pallet per month, plus pick up/ drop off fees, for freezer space at a nearby facility. It has three pallets, each of which holds 120 gallons (Milano, 2013). Additional freezer space is planned for Elijah's Promise's new Incubator Kitchen. And staff have been learning more about canning and fermentation to expand their range of processing options.





SAVING MONEY

There are many ways to think about the costs and benefits of freezing produce. Elijah's Promise saves money by freezing low cost, sometimes free, produce in the summer. The donations contribute to reducing the amount of money Elijah's Promise spends on purchasing staple and specialty products like tomatoes, kale, eggplant, garlic, cilantro, tomatoes, acorn, and squash.

The Fellows reviewed Elijah's Promise's food receipts and discussed how much produce they saved through freezing last summer. While these are not perfect estimates given how difficult it is to track often-donated produce by weight/item consistently and how prices vary over the year, they do offer some idea of how much Elijah's Promise saves. These are also only a few examples as the organization saves a variety of products.

A pound of eggplant costs, on average, 80 cents to \$3 depending on the source and the time of year. Between August and September, Elijah's Promise received 360 pounds of donated eggplant, which means a savings of \$288 and \$1,080.

Between August 1st, 2013 and September 30th, 2013, Elijah's Promise received 5,000 pounds of donated tomatoes, which it turned into 714 gallons of tomato sauce. A 6-gallon bottle of tomato sauce costs \$32 from Elijah's Promise's vendors, which means that Elijah's Promise saved \$3,808 producing tomato sauce.

When bought from a vendor or a farm, a pound of squash, on average, costs \$0.85 per pound between July and September. This price increases to an average of \$1.15 per pound during the winter. Since 60 pounds were donated to Elijah's Promise during summer months, this saved Elijah's Promise \$69.



COSTS & BENEFITS

VS

IMPACTS ON	Соѕтѕ	BENEFITS	Costs	BENEFITS
ENVIROMENT	Transportation and carbon release	Mitigates carbon footprint	BPA in cans, food miles and packaging	
Human Health & Taste		 Control over content/ingrediants (e.g. Salt) Flexibility and tailored to audience Better nutrition and taste 	Less healthy	Consistent quality Reliability
MATERIAL & SPACE	Requires equipment, kitchen space and freezer space	Longer shelf life	Raw product costs	No freezer space
LABOR	Human capital and labor (especially skilled workers) required	Community relations Connection to farmers Opportunities for volunteers Intergenerational learning Creates jobs Marketing platform (awreness) Job training/education		No preparations required Less skilled workers
MONETARY	A pound of eggplant costs, on average, between 80 cents and 3 dollars during season	Since 360 lbs. were donated Elijah's Promise saved between \$288 and \$1080	It costs\$32 to buy a 6-gallon can of tomato sauce	Since 5000 (714 gallons) pounds of tomatoes were gleaned and turned into tomato sauce, EP saved \$3808
OTHER		Emergency food on hand		

ELIJAH'S PROMISE'S FREEZING EFFORT COSTS & BENEFITS

NON-MONETARY BENEFITS

Elijah's Promise freezes food to save money but there are many other benefits to freezing fresh produce and these include:

- Saving money and preserving food seasonality and locality - Elijah's Promise's Chef Rachel uses New Jersey blueberries frozen during the summer to make blueberry pie and muffins in the winter.
- Freezing meals provides flexibility Chef Carol notes that frozen portion-controlled meals bring fluidity to the • process of preparing meals especially after weekends, during emergencies, and when they are short-staffed.
- Maximizing nutritional value Elijah's Promise preserves rich, nutrient-dense produce when it freezes just picked fresh produce.
- Conserving food color, texture and flavor Blanching and shocking produce at optimal ripeness helps retard nutrient loss, brightens color, and removes bacteria, mold and parasites.
- Mitigating carbon footprint Elijah's Promise reduces food miles and its carbon footprint by decreasing its dependency on boxed and canned food.
- Controlling additives such as salt, oil and preservatives - Elijah's Promise uses minimal salt and oil as many customers struggle with high blood pressure, diabetes, and other health problems.

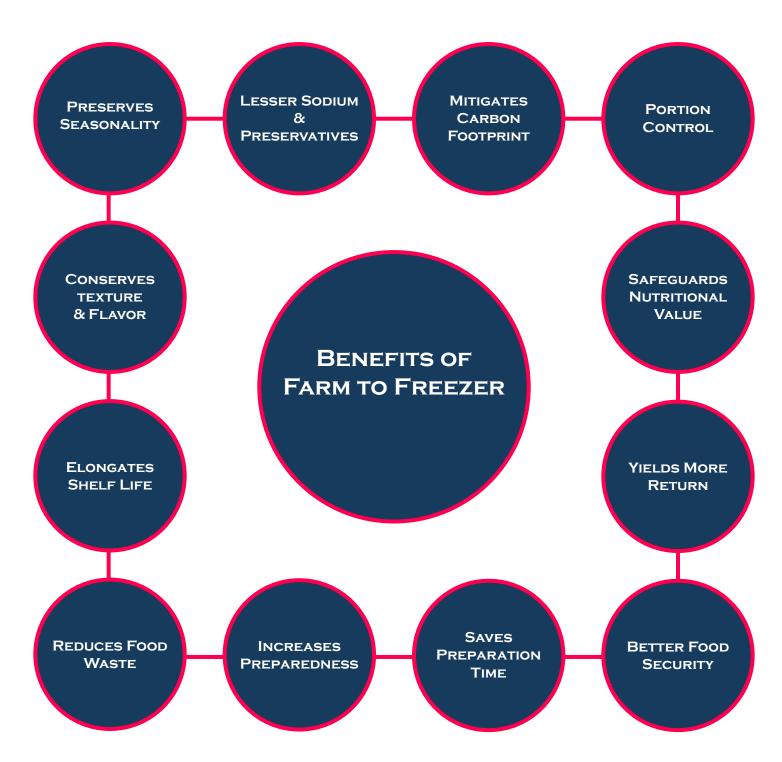
- Elongating shelf-life of perishable foods Freezing perishable foods like fruits, vegetables, meats and herbs enables Elijah's Promise to store such foods for later use and make full use of fresh food donations even if they cannot use all of that food immediately.
- Increasing preparedness for emergency response -Preparing meals and ingredients has enabled Elijah's Promise to respond quickly in emergencies. After Hurricane Sandy, Elijah's Promise's Meals-on-Wheels program serve fresh food two days after the storm hit.
- Reducing food waste Elijah's Promise's farm-tofreezer program enables it to accept and save large influxes of gleaned produce that otherwise would go to waste.
- Yielding better economic return for farmers Elijah's Promise buys food and uses gleaned food from New Jersey Farmers.





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FIGURE 3



Elijah's Promise puts a high priority on storing fresh food for use throughout the year. As we learn more about the connection between what we eat and our health, ensuring that everyone eats high quality food becomes a necessary and important goal. Elijah's Promise controls the quality of their ingredients and works hard to build connections and relationships with farmers and volunteers. While we might think of the costs of doing this work, the way that Elijah's Promise does the work, the costs are often benefits.

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- Vegtable Graphics on Cover are attributed to the following designers from the Noun Project
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