

Root Cellaring

Store root crops and produce using cool, dark conditions alone

DIFFICULTY Easy-moderate
TYPE One-off setup, ongoing use
TIME A weekend to set up a space



DIFFICULTY
Easy-moderate



TIME
Setup: 1 day



COST
Low



BEST SEASON
Autumn harvest,
used through
winter



FREQUENCY
Ongoing through
storage season

01 Cool, dark, and humid

A root cellar doesn't need to be an underground room — any consistently cool, dark, reasonably humid space (a shaded shed corner, an insulated box, an unheated garage) can serve the same purpose.



02 What you'll need

- A cool, dark space (ideally 0–4°C for long-term storage)
- Boxes or crates, ideally with damp sand or sawdust for some crops
- Good airflow to prevent mould
- Undamaged, unwashed produce for storage

03 Method

1. Choose the coolest, darkest available space with reasonably stable temperature.
2. Harvest root crops carefully to avoid bruising or cutting, and don't wash before storing.
3. Layer crops like carrots in damp sand or sawdust in a crate to prevent them drying out.
4. Store crops like onions and garlic differently — hanging or in mesh bags with good airflow, not damp sand.
5. Check stored produce periodically and remove anything showing rot before it spreads.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Produce shrivelling** — storage space too dry; increase humidity slightly, or use the damp sand method for root crops.
- **Mould or rot spreading** — check for damaged produce going in, and ensure adequate airflow; remove affected items promptly.
- **Space too warm** — look for a cooler location, or consider it only suitable for shorter-term storage.
- **Produce sprouting** — normal for potatoes and onions over time in storage; use them before this becomes significant, or store at colder temperatures to slow it.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Set up before the main autumn harvest so crops go straight into storage.
DURATION	Well-stored root crops can keep for several months over winter.
MAINTENANCE	Check stored produce every few weeks, removing anything spoiling.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Produce staying firm, unshrivelled, and rot-free well into the storage season.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Fermenting

Dehydrating

COMMON MISTAKES

Washing produce before storage, which speeds spoilage

Storing bruised or damaged produce alongside good produce

PRO TIP

Onions and potatoes should never be stored together — onions release gases that shorten potato storage life.