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EC63-929 Home Freezing of Cooked and Prepared Foods

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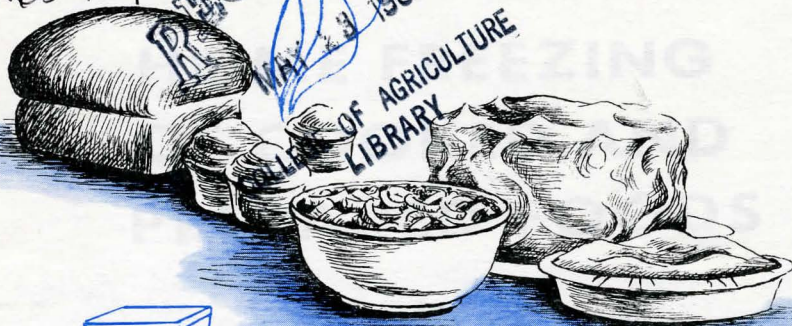
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HOME FREEZING of COOKED and PREPARED FOODS

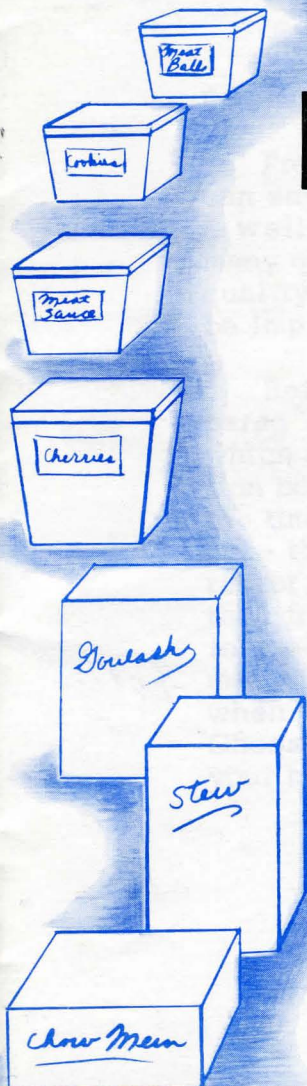
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Extension Specialist, Food and Nutrition

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HOME FREEZING OF COOKED AND PREPARED FOODS

by Ruth Wattnem

Extension Specialist, Food and Nutrition

Frozen cooked and prepared foods can save you time, energy and money. A well-stocked freezer may provide many quick and nutritious meals. The quality of the family daily fare should be improved.

Before filling the freezer with prepared foods you will want to decide which ones require little time or attention between freezer and table. Compare the time it would take to completely prepare the food, and the time needed to reheat. Some frozen foods use more heat than freshly prepared foods and so are less economical. There are, however, many frozen dishes that are excellent when properly prepared and frozen. Choose foods practical for freezing in your home.

Foods to Freeze

1. Seasonal foods to prevent waste and extend the season.
2. Those foods that take a long time to prepare.
3. Foods prepared in quantity.
4. Foods requiring slight thawing.
5. Foods that are good after a reasonable storage time.
6. Leftovers that cannot be used soon.

Hints for Freezing

1. Select only top quality ingredients. Frozen foods will be no better than the foods you begin with.
2. Do not cook foods completely before freezing or they are apt to be mushy on reheating.
3. Cool foods quickly before packaging. Place the pan of food in a large pan of ice water, crushed ice or cubes. A fan may be used to cool foods that cannot be stirred.
4. Freeze food quickly. Put no more unfrozen food in the freezer than will freeze within 24 hours. Usually this will be 2 or 3 pounds per cubic foot of freezer capacity. Stack food after it is frozen.
5. Keep using foods from the freezer and replenish with others. This makes greater use of freezer space and lowers the cost per pound of food stored.
6. The temperature of the freezer should not go above 0° F. Fluctuating temperatures and temperatures that are not low enough cause loss of quality. Plan to use frozen prepared foods within a short time.

Packaging

1. Freeze promptly as soon as cooled to room temperature.

2. Use freezer containers and wrappings of moisture-vapor-resistant material.

3. Pack food compactly into the container to reduce the amount of air in the package.

4. In quart containers, the food may be separated into 2 or 3 layers by a double thickness of water resistant material such as cellophane. This makes it possible to separate the frozen blocks.

5. Choose a container that holds only enough for one meal for your family. Quart containers hold 4 to 6 servings; pints, 2 to 3.

6. Use only containers with wide top openings so the food does not have to be thawed to be removed.

7. Freeze and store the prepared foods in your favorite casserole or remove from baking dish, wrap and return to the freezer for storage.

8. Heat-in-the-pouch food packaging materials are available to homemakers. The food is measured into the plastic pouch, heat sealed and frozen. Food is reheated in the same pouch. Several pouches of food may be heated in the same pan of hot water. A special type of plastic bag and sealing equipment is necessary.

PREPARATION OF COOKED AND PREPARED FOODS

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0° F.
MAIN DISHES - Prepare food as for serving - slightly undercooked.				
Baked beans		Freeze promptly when cool. Use container of right size for family - may freeze in casserole, remove, wrap and store. May be frozen in cubes or blocks to hasten reheating. Package compactly to avoid air spaces between.	Reheat at low or medium temperature in a heavy saucepan or double boiler. Bake in oven at 350° F. Add crumb or cheese topping if desired.	2-6 months
Stews	Do not add potato. Cool quickly in a shallow pan. May set in pan of ice water and stir occasionally.			
Goulash				
4 Rice & spaghetti dishes				
Chicken a la King				
Chow Mein				
Soups				
Meat sauce				
Stuffed peppers	Fill with corned beef hash or ground meat mixture.	Freeze before or after wrapping.	Unwrap. Bake in a 350° F. oven.	2-4 months

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0°F.
Fried chicken	Prepare as for serving.	Package	Reheat in skillet or 350° F. oven.	2-4 weeks
Stew meat, roasts	Prepare as for serving.	Package in appropriate size container or wrapping.	Add vegetables to stew. Complete cooking or reheat at a moderate heat.	4-6 months
Meat loaf	Baked or unbaked.			
Meat balls, veal birds	Best covered with sauce.			
Ham	Bake or boil. Saves freezer space to remove bone. Keep pieces large.	Package in meal-size portions.	Thaw in wrapping to slice cold. Heat in moisture-proof bag by immersing in hot water.	1-3 months
Roast turkey or chicken	Prepare as usual but do not stuff. Cool.	Wrap whole or in meal-size portions.	Leave covered. Reheat in moderate oven.	1-2 months

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0° F.
Meat pies	Prepare as usual but do not bake. Just a top crust may be most satisfactory. Avoids a soggy lower crust.	Package in oven-proof baking dish. Wrap - freeze.	Bake in 400° F. oven.	3 months

POTATOES (Some varieties produce better products than others).

9 Mashed	Prepare as usual.	Spoon carefully into rigid containers.	Thaw just enough to slip out of the container into top of a double boiler. Heat.	2-4 weeks
Cakes or patties	A good way to use leftover mashed. May add slightly beaten egg for variety.	Package with a double layer of paper between patties.	Dip in flour and brown in fat at low heat.	2-4 weeks

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0° F.
Stuffed (baked)	Cut freshly baked potatoes in half lengthwise. Scoop out potato, leaving skins unbroken. Mash in usual way. Pile into shells. Cool.	Freeze. Package.	Unwrap. Place on baking sheet. May garnish with paprika or cheese. Reheat in moderate oven until piping hot.	1 month
French fries	Use a good frying potato. Fry in hot fat until a light brown.	Place in moisture-vapor-resistant bags, seal and freeze immediately.	Spread on cooky sheet and place in 400° F. oven until thawed and crisp.	1-2 months
Sweet potatoes	Baked, boiled, dip in lemon juice. Candied. Mashed.	Package compactly in meal-size portions.	Reheat at a moderate temperature.	3 months

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0°F.
PLATE MEALS	<p>Foods packaged together should retain quality for about the same period of time and should require the same heating time. Most vegetables need only blanching before freezing.</p> <p>Plate meals usually contain two vegetables and a meat. Choose those with a variety in color, shape, texture and flavor. Pack foods to keep air out. Some foods can be covered with sauce to fill the air spaces.</p>	<p>Chill quickly. Package carefully. Freeze promptly.</p>	<p>To reheat - leave covered. Foods that are to remain crispy should be uncovered.</p>	<p>1 month</p>
			<p>Suggested combinations:</p> <p>Roast beef - corn - spinach</p> <p>Swiss steak - french fried potatoes - peas</p> <p>Sliced turkey - stuffed baked potatoes - mixed vegetable</p> <p>Ham slice - sweet potato - broccoli</p>	

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0° F.
SALADS	Those with a solid base, such as cottage cheese, cream cheese, or whipped cream are most satisfactory.	Freeze in blocks, cubes, or individual molds. Wrap. Store with 2 layers of paper between each layer.	Serve as they come from the freezer or allow to mellow for about an hour in the refrigerator.	2-3 weeks
6 BREADS (Quick)	Little time saved.	Cool. Package in a wrapping in which they may be reheated.	Leave wrapped. Thaw. Reheat in 300° F. oven for about 20 minutes.	2-4 weeks
Biscuits	May want to freeze leftovers.			
Muffins				
Coffee cake	Prepare as usual. More satisfactory if baked before freezing.	Cool to room temperature. Freeze and then package to prevent crushing.		3 months
Fruit bread				
Doughnuts	If dough is frozen use double acting baking powder.		Thaw dough. Cook as usual.	2 months

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0° F.
Waffles and pancakes	Prepare as usual. Bake to a light brown.	Cool. Package. Freeze.	Place a section of the frozen waffle or pancake in the toaster until hot and crispy.	2 months

BREADS (Yeast)

10	Rolls (baked) Sweet rolls Coffee cake	Prepare as usual. Cook quickly.	Package in moisture- vapor-resistant wrap- ping in which they can be reheated.	Reheat in wrapping in 250° - 300° F. oven for about 15- 20 minutes.	3-6 months
	Brown and serve	Bake 3/4 done at 275° F. Cool quickly.	Same as for baked.	Thaw in package 10- 15 minutes. Bake in 450° F. oven for 5-10 minutes or un- til browned.	3 months

Unbaked rolls Usually not very satisfactory.

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0°F.
Bread (loaf)	Prepare as usual. Cool quickly.	Wrap. Freeze.	Thaw in wrapping.	6-8 months
SANDWICHES	Spread to the edges with softened butter or margarine. Suitable fillings include: sliced or ground meat and poultry, peanut butter, cheese spreads, cooked egg yolks, fish or meat salad with a small amount of moistening.	Wrap separately or in pairs.	Thaw in wrapping.	3-4 weeks
CAKES				
Shortened (baked)	Prepare and bake as usual. Cool. May be iced or uniced.	Freeze whole or wrap in individual or family-size pieces. Freeze iced cakes before wrapping.	Thaw uniced cakes in wrapping at room temperature. Unwrap iced cakes and thaw in the refrigerator.	2-4 months

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0°F.
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CAKES

12	(unbaked)	Use double-acting baking powder. May lose volume.	Less loss of volume if stored in pan they are to be baked in. Wrap. Freeze.	Thaw at room temperature. Bake as usual.	2 weeks
	Sponge	Bake. Thoroughly cool. Sponge cake using lemon juice has a less pronounced egg flavor.	May freeze before packaging. Use sturdy outer container to prevent crushing.	Thaw in original container. Unfrosted in the refrigerator.	4-6 months
	Angel				
	Chiffon				

ICINGS

Powdered sugar icings with fat freeze well. Cooked candy type frostings stay soft and creamy as filling but may crack or crumble as icings. Whipped cream may be frozen on the cake or separately.

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0°F.
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COOKIES

Baked	Cool thoroughly.	Package in foil or rigid container. Place 2 layers of waxed paper between the cookies.	Thaw in containers at room temperature or remove from the container.	6 months
Unbaked	Prepare your favorite cookie dough.	Wrap in foil or other moisture-vapor-resistant material. Drop cookie dough may be stored in any tub container.	Most refrigerator doughs may be cut as soon as removed from the freezer or softened slightly by placing in the refrigerator for an hour. Thaw batter for cookies before baking.	2 weeks

Food	To prepare	To package	To prepare for serving	Storage 0° F.
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PIES

Unbaked 2-crust deep dish	Prepare as usual. Do not prick top crust.	Freeze before wrap- ping or wrap and freeze. May stack in the freezer.	Unwrap. Place in preheated oven. After 5 minutes cut vent in top. Bake at 450° F. for 10 minutes and 400° F. for about 50-60 minutes.	2 months
Baked	Bake until crust is light brown. Cool quickly. May use fan.	Freeze and wrap as unbaked.	Unwrap. Reheat in 375° F. preheated oven. Thaw pump- kin at 350° F.	2 months

Remember

1. For top quality frozen foods use good handling and cookery practices.

2. Experiment - freeze small portions of your family's favorite dishes. Do they freeze well?

3. Don't try to duplicate commercial products. Many methods, types of equipment and ingredients are not available in the home.

4. Refreeze partially defrosted foods if their temperature has not reached more than 40° F. The quality of most foods will probably be somewhat lower.

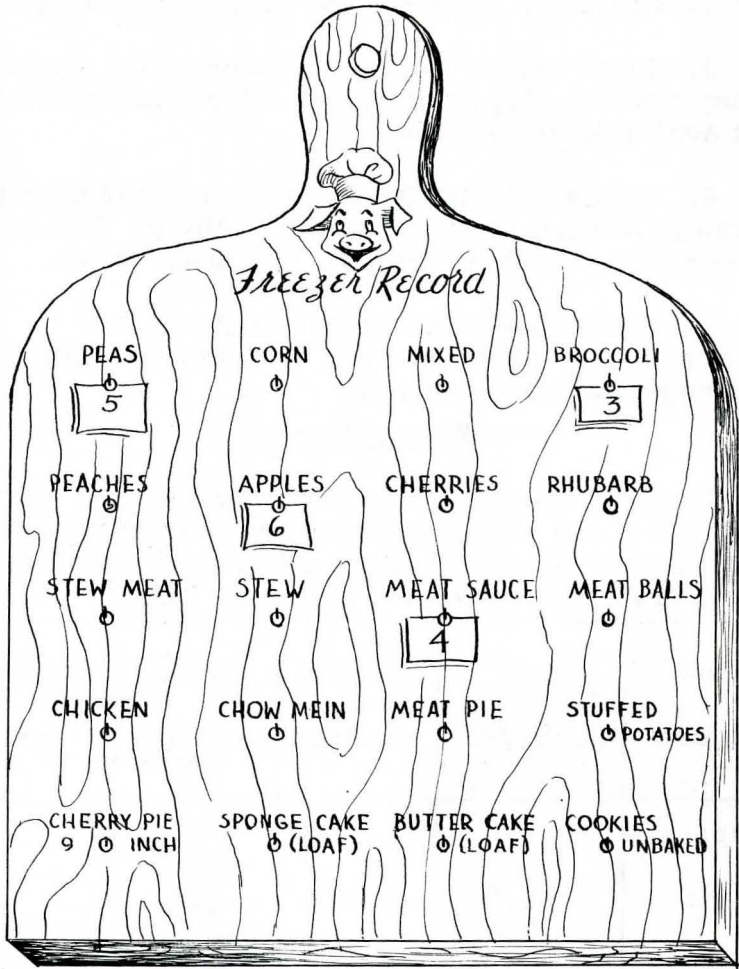
5. Foods that do not freeze well include: Mayonnaise, salad dressings, cooked egg white, crisp raw vegetables and custards.

Keep a Record

Keep a simple inventory of the food in your freezer. It can be a real help in planning your meals. List foods on your chart according to the sections in your freezer. A list might look something like this:

Kind of food	Date packaged	Size of package	No. of packages	Packages used
Apple Pie	1-20-63	9 inch	3	1
Chicken a la King	2-1-63	1 quart	4	111
Stew Meat	2-8-63	Serve-6	10	111

You might like to use a freezer board. This can be made a size to suit your needs. A bread board with cup hooks to hang numbered tags is a favorite with some homemakers.



As a package is removed from the freezer, remove a numbered tag, #6. This leaves #5, which shows the number of packages of that product left in the freezer.

You will have good food from your home freezer if you:

1. Select good quality foods. Freezing does not improve most foods.
2. Slightly undercook prepared foods. They will finish cooking when reheated.
3. Cool and freeze quickly for a high quality product.
4. Use moisture-vapor-resistant wrapping and containers. Air causes undesirable changes in frozen foods. Keep it out.
5. Label and date all packages of food. The shorter the period of freezer storage the more appetizing your food will be when served.
6. Keep food frozen at 0° F. to maintain a high quality.
7. Cook defrosted foods as soon as possible after thawing.
8. Keep frozen purchased foods frozen until placed in the home freezer.
9. Cook and bake for the freezer when you are preparing regular meals. It is easy to double the recipe for your favorite dish and store the extra in the freezer.

