



Freezing

It's easy to use your freezer like a pause button to keep foods fresh longer. For foods with a 'best before' date, it's safe to freeze them any time before that date, then defrost them in the fridge and use them within 24 hours. You'll be surprised to see how many foods you can freeze. Our guide will show to how to get optimal results.

VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

VEGETABLES

Dice onions, chilies or bell peppers, then freeze flat in gallon freezer bags. As they are freezing, press 'score' lines into the bags so that you can break off as much or as little as you need.

BANANAS

Peel and freeze for use in smoothies.

BERRIES

When freezing berries, it's best to first freeze spread out on freezer or parchment paper on a cookie sheet, and then place in bags or airtight containers. Individual frozen pieces let you pull out just how much you need.

CORN

Put the ears of corn straight in the freezer without removing the husk. Microwave the frozen corn in the husk for about five minutes on high for two ears or four minutes for one ear. The silk insulates and protects the corn while it cooks.

MASHED POTATOES

Use a large spoon or scoop to put even portions of mashed potatoes onto a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Freeze and transfer into a freezer bag or airtight containers. These will keep for at least two months. Defrost what you need overnight in the fridge.

TOMATO PASTE

So many recipes call for only one tablespoon. Put the rest in a little sandwich bag or container. Just break some off when you need it.



GRAIN PRODUCTS



PASTA

Go ahead and cook the whole package! Freeze left-overs for later to add to soups and casseroles. Or freeze individual size portions in a baggie or container, making sure to squeeze out the air. Reheat in hot water.

DAIRY



CHEESE

Slice or shred cheese first and bag it in portions you know you'll be able to use up. Hard cheeses freeze better than soft cheeses.



MILK

Plastic milk jugs allow milk to expand when it's freezing. Do not freeze opened milk containers. Once the milk has thawed give it a good shake to make sure any solids are remixed. Freeze buttermilk using a container made for freezing. Gable-top cartons are not suitable.



PROTEINS



MEATS

Place meat in a freezer bag or airtight container, pour in the marinade and freeze. When you defrost the meat, it will be fully marinated and ready to cook.



EGGS

Crack eggs and pour contents in a freezer bag or ice cube tray. Thaw out in the fridge and use as you normally would.



GENERAL HOME FREEZING GUIDANCE

While different types of food may require specific handling or treatments to achieve the best results from frozen storage, many techniques are general to all types of food.

PRE-FREEZING

- Slightly undercook foods if you're planning to freeze them. This will allow for cooking during reheating (excluding meat or fish and seafood – be sure to fully cook these).
- Freeze unused leftovers within 2 days and use within 2 days of thawing and reheating.
- Cool your food before freezing to prevent raising the temperature in your freezer, e.g. use ice or cold water to cool containers of warm food.
- Separate products like steaks into separate portions. Faster freezing will result in smaller ice crystals and better quality, so keep packs/portions as small as possible.
- Wrapping foods well in airtight packages is critical, as it helps avoid moisture loss and keeps air out, eliminating freezer burn.
- Write the date you are freezing the food on the pack so that you know how long it has been frozen for; use stock rotation if needed.
- Foil and cardboard take-away containers do not seal well. Plastic take-away containers may work if they seal well or can be overwrapped with a sealable freezer bag.
- Seasonings and flavours such as curry, garlic and chili can strengthen or migrate between components during frozen storage and some can shorten shelf life e.g. salt has been found to accelerate the development of fat rancidity. You may want to add seasoning after thawing and/or reheating.



FREEZING

- Your freezer should be set at -18°C (0°F) or colder.
- Where possible, avoid freezer temperature fluctuations (by avoiding loading warm food etc.), as these encourage large ice crystals and freezer burn to develop.
- Leave gaps between products while first freezing them (e.g. if freezing field berries). Freeze individual items/portions separately on a baking tray, then store them together when frozen.
- For fast freezing, place packages as close as possible to the cold evaporator in the freezer. Depending on type, this will be behind the back and side walls or in visibly apparent circuits built into the shelves.
- Use the fast freeze setting if you have one, particularly for large items.
- For separate freezers and fridge-freezers with dual thermostats, the freezer thermostat setting can be lowered to speed up freezing if there is no fast freeze function. Remember to re-set the freezer to its normal storage temperature to avoid excessive energy use.
- Air trapped in packs can shorten shelf life and affect food colour, flavour and texture. Consider using a vacuum packing machine if you often freeze large amounts of food. As an alternative, use a straw to suck excess air out of sealable freezer bags.

FROZEN STORAGE

- Improper frozen storage generally affects quality (rancidity, texture, freezer burn etc.) rather than safety (bacteria, moulds, etc.).
- Storage life of home frozen goods can be shorter than industrially frozen products due to slower freezing and inferior packaging.
- Rotate stock according to the date it was frozen, to minimize the length of time any food is kept in the freezer.
- Don't keep food in a freezer indefinitely; try to eat it within three months.

THAWING & USE

- Freezing interrupts food spoilage. If a product is stored for a long time before you freeze it, use it as soon as possible once thawed.
- It's best to thaw most foods in your refrigerator. This will help avoid some parts of the food rising to temperature sooner than others, which can promote bacterial growth. Some sources advise that products with meat, fish, dairy and eggs should only be thawed in a refrigerator.
- When thawing products such as meat and fish in a refrigerator, they should be kept sealed and placed on a tray or plate. Place the plate at the bottom of the refrigerator to avoid spillage of leaking packaging and cross-contamination of other products.
- You can thaw food stored in sealed bags by placing the bags in cold water, refreshed every 30 minutes.
- Defrost foods in a microwave only if you intend to cook them immediately. Microwave heating is uneven and may start to heat the product unevenly, promoting bacterial growth.
- Some products, e.g. baked goods, should be thawed at ambient room temperature, as extended periods at refrigeration temperatures increase staling.
- Thawing food before cooking helps ensure the food is heated sufficiently during cooking to kill any harmful bacteria.

RE-FREEZING



If products are frozen raw in the home, or bought frozen, then thawed and cooked, the product can be re-frozen. Avoid re-freezing meat or fish and seafood that have been frozen and thawed.



FRIDGE AND FREEZER STORAGE

The following recommended refrigeration times are for safety, and the freezing times are for quality. If you store properly wrapped food in your freezer, the quality may be maintained for a longer period of time.

Food	Refrigerator at 4 °C (40 °F) or lower	Freezer at - 18 °C (0 °F) or lower
Fresh meat		
Beef	2-4 days	10 - 12 months
Pork	2-4 days	8 - 12 months
Lamb	2-4 days	8 - 12 months
Veal	3-4 days	8 - 12 months
Ground meat	1-2 days	2 - 3 months
Fresh poultry		
Chicken/Turkey - whole	2-3 days	1 year
Chicken/Turkey - pieces	2-3 days	6 months
Fresh fish		
Lean fish - cod, flounder etc.	3-4 days	6 months
Fatty fish - salmon etc.	3-4 days	2 months
Shellfish - clams, crab, lobster etc.	12-24 hours	2-4 months
Scallops, shrimp, cooked shellfish	1-2 days	2-4 months
Ham		
Canned ham	6-9 months	Don't freeze
Cooked ham	3-4 days	2-3 months
Bacon and sausages		
Bacon	1 week	1 month
Raw sausage	1-2 days	1-2 months
Pre-cooked sausage links or patties	1 week	1-2 months
Lunch meat and deli food		
Lunch meat - unopened	2 weeks	1-2 months
Lunch meat - opened	3-5 days	1-2 months
Deli packaged lunch meat	3-4 days	2-3 months
Deli or homemade salads	3-5 days	Don't freeze
Leftovers		
Cooked meat, stews, egg or vegetable dishes	3-4 days	2-3 months
Cooked poultry and fish	3-4 days	4-6 months
Meat broth and gravy	3-4 days	4-6 months
Soups	2-3 days	4 months

Food	Refrigerator at 4 °C (40 °F) or lower	Freezer at - 18 °C (0 °F) or lower
Eggs		
Fresh in shell	3-4 weeks	Don't freeze
Fresh out of shell	2-4 days	4 months
Hard-cooked	1 week	Doesn't freeze well
Egg substitutes - unopened	10 days	1 year
Egg substitutes - opened	3 days	Don't freeze
Dairy products		
Milk - unopened	Best before date	6 weeks
Milk - opened	3 days	Don't freeze
Cottage cheese - unopened	Best before date	Doesn't freeze well
Cottage cheese - opened	3 days	Don't freeze
Yogurt - unopened	Best before date	1-2 months
Yogurt - opened	3 days	Don't freeze
Soft cheese	1 week	Doesn't freeze well
Semi-soft cheese	2-3 weeks	8 weeks
Firm cheese	5 weeks	3 months
Hard cheese	10 months	1 year
Processed cheese	5 months	3 months
Salted butter - unopened	8 weeks	1 year
Unsalted butter - opened	8 weeks	3 months
Salted butter - opened	3 weeks	Don't freeze
Hot dogs		
Hot dogs - unopened	2 weeks	1-2 months
Hot dogs - opened	1 week	1-2 months
Vegetables		
Beans, green or waxed	5 days	8 months
Carrots	2 weeks	10-12 months
Celery	2 weeks	10-12 months
Leaf lettuce	3-7 days	Don't freeze
Iceberg lettuce	1-2 weeks	Don't freeze
Spinach	2-4 weeks	10-12 months
Summer squash	1 week	10-12 months
Winter squash	2 weeks	10-12 months
Tomatoes	Don't refrigerate	2 months

Source: Government of Canada Food Safety
www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/general-food-safety-tips.html