

# FOOD & DINING

## The Scoop on Frozen Foods



Freezing food for storage is an ideal way to stretch budgets and plan ahead for meals when time is of the essence. Storing foods in the freezer also saves money by reducing spoilage and the amount of food that ends up in the trash.

Putting food on ice has been a popular storage method for centuries. Despite myths that about about frozen foods, nutritional content in most food is not lost during the freezing process, and frozen produce is just as healthy as fresh items. Some other foods may not taste as good or retain their distinctive texture when frozen, but knowing how and when to freeze is the key.

### SEAFOOD

Most of the seafood available at markets undergoes a process called "twice freezing," an acceptable and cost-saving measure. Fish caught at sea is immediately frozen for shipping. It is then thawed, cleaned and processed, after which it is frozen again and sent to market locations. Once frozen fish has been thawed for use in meals, it is unadvisable to refreeze leftovers. The same can be said for meat or poultry that has been previously frozen. Otherwise you may notice the taste and texture are quite different from fresh foods.

### WATERY FOODS

Fruits, soft cheeses and water-rich produce like celery or cucumbers should stay out of the freezer. While they may freeze well and fast, upon thawing you can be left with mushy, limp and watery results.

### EGGS

Do not freeze eggs in their shells. During the freezing process, the eggs will expand and the shells will crack. This can pose a food-storage issue. It is better to eat eggs fresh.

### FRIED FOODS

Fried foods will not retain their crispiness after freezing and thawing if they are already cooked. If you must prepare fried foods in advance, coat the uncooked foods in a breading material and then freeze. When you're ready to fry, remove the items from the freezer and cook.

### DAIRY

Milk will freeze and thaw well, but other dairy products may not hold up as well. Some dairy products may separate upon thawing and curdle. Cream cheese, sour cream and mayonnaise will lose their smooth consistency after being frozen. Stick to harder cheeses, such as cheddar, for freezing. And if you must freeze cheese, use it in foods that will be cooked, like casseroles or pasta dishes, instead of being served on its own.

When freezing any foods, keep in mind that liquid will expand. Leave adequate room for expansion in the storage container. Unless the original container (such as a milk carton) has enough room, you may need to transfer foods to another container before freezing.

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