



CHEAT SHEET

Batch Freezing

At least once per week plan to double or triple an easy entrée recipe for batch freezing. Great options include soups, stews, chilies, casseroles, enchiladas and lasagna. Eat 1, freeze 1-2. Within a month you will have a stock of homemade frozen dinners you can integrate into your weekly menus to save yourself a night of cooking every week.

How to Freeze Entrees

The rules are the same for pre-cooked and uncooked entrees.

- 1. Chill all entrees to refrigerator temperature before freezing:** Never freeze warm or room-temp foods.
- 2. To prevent freezer burn, reduce air exposure:** Squeeze all air out of zip closure bags before sealing. Lay a layer of freezer-safe plastic wrap directly over the surface of foods like soups, stews and casseroles in formed storage containers before putting the lid on. Use vapor lock seals if you have them.
- 3. Remove any condensation from refrigeration before freezing.** Any extra moisture will freeze into unappetizing crystals that will add unwanted liquid to your dish when thawing.
- 4. Freeze it fast:** The faster a food freezes, the smaller the ice crystals and fewer the changes to its flavor and texture. Don't crowd the food you're trying to freeze. Leave space around it in the freezer (versus stacking) to speed freezing time. You can stack and pack your entrees once they are frozen solid.
- 5. Keep your freezer at 0°F (-18°C)** and minimize opening the freezer door.

Eat your homemade frozen entrees within 3 months of the freezing date for the freshest-tasting product.

How to Thaw Entrees

PLAN AHEAD: The best way to thaw your frozen dishes is in the refrigerator versus on the counter or in the microwave. Countertop thawing is not a safe practice because of the potential for dangerous bacterial growth, and the microwave defrosts foods unevenly and tends to kill the "freshness factor".

1. At your evening meal transfer your frozen entrée to the refrigerator and let it thaw overnight.
2. The next day, remove any lid or plastic wrap and reheat or cook it for dinner that night as if you'd just made it.

Dense or large dishes, such as layered lasagna, will sometimes require 36 hours versus just 24 to thaw, so plan accordingly.

Helping You Make
Tastier, Healthier Food
in Less Time



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The Best Freezer Containers

1. The most practical “soft” containers are **freezer-safe zip closure bags** of different sizes. These work well for liquids like soup or slices such as sliced meatloaf.
2. Though most plastics are freezer-safe because they are inert in the cold temps, my favorite formed freezer containers are **tempered glass dishes** built to withstand both cold and heat. The glass will not affect your food’s taste, will not stain, nor leach anything harmful into your food when heated. Tempered glass can also travel safely from fridge to freezer to fridge to oven to table for minimal dish use. It’s not safe to go from the freezer straight into the oven with tempered glass as the extreme temperature change can shatter it, but fridge-to-oven use is fine. Some brands, like Pyrex, also come with their own handy lids.



Don't Freeze These

Though there is an endless variety of dishes that freeze beautifully, some foods do not hold up well to freezing:

- Both white and sweet potatoes can turn an unappetizing shade of grey in the freezer, though that won't affect the taste.
- Scrambled eggs will freeze and thaw fine, but hard-boiled or fried eggs will turn to rubber. If you want to freeze breakfast burritos, for instance, use scrambled eggs. Egg-based meringues will also die if frozen.
- Many cream, cheese and yogurt-based sauces and mayonnaise will separate if frozen. Sometimes they will hold up if used as a small component of a casserole, however. Pasta doesn't freeze well unless it's immersed in sauce, soup or a casserole.
- Delicate, water-based fruits and vegetables such as lettuces, cucumbers and melons don't freeze well. Salad veggies will disintegrate into a mess when thawed. Melons will hold up, but have a leathery texture if thawed. They work fine if used frozen, however, as in smoothies.

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