

FREEZER MEALS, FULLY



THE COOKFUL

Edited by Christine Pittman and Amy Bowen

Freezer Meals, Fully

We've teamed up with the amazing people at [Once a Month Meals](#) to tell you about making Freezer Meals. If you don't know about OAMM they're a wonderful service that gives you a slew of freezable recipes every month. The idea is that you can spend one day making these recipes, put them in your freezer and then breeze your way through 30 days with very little cooking and very little clean up. They give you swappable menus with all kinds of dietary needs and restrictions accounted for, an instantly generated and organized grocery list, a list of ingredients that need to be prepped, the recipes, freezer labels and even a defrost schedule to stick to your fridge so that you know when to take your meals out of the freezer. Sounds pretty great, right?

No? It doesn't sound great? You hate freezer meals? Lasagna and Tuna Casserole aren't your thing?

Wait! Wait! Wait! Freezer meals aren't like that anymore. That's what the OAMM peeps are telling us. You can totally make delicious and even gourmet freezer meals that use fresh seasonal ingredients. Really. You can. The key is knowing how to do it properly so that the end product tastes as good as it did the day you cooked it.



THE COOKFUL

Introduction

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We have tons of tips to help you with this. We'll be starting off with a buying guide. These are tools (most of which you probably already have!) that make freezer-cooking a breeze. Then we'll spend some more time fully convincing you that freezer meals can be delicious and we'll give you our best advice so that you can make it a reality. We have a fun article with 15 gourmet ingredients that you didn't know you could freeze. And then a slew of delicious freezable recipes for you.

Join with us and the OAMM team to learn about freezer-cooking so you can stock your freezer for the busy season ahead.



THE COOKFUL

Freezer Meals, Fully

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The Fabulous Freezer Meal Shopping List

By Kim Coleman

If you're a fabulously busy person, the freezer is your friend. Get the scoop on what you need to start freezing fabulous meals.

Freezing meals is one of the best ways to eat well and save time in the kitchen. You can prep ingredients, double batches of your favorite recipes or even do a major cooking day and prepare several meals for later. You probably have a lot of the basics already in your kitchen or can easily find them at your local store. We've also listed some helpful extras if you're interested in a big freezer cooking day (preparing 10-30 meals for your freezer at one time). If you're interested in more tips and recipes for a big one-day cook, visit our friends at [Once a Month Meals](#). They've got it all figured out for you.

Basics

Freezer: Kind of a no brainer. But consider purchasing a separate one for your freezer meal stash (Know how some knitters have a yarn stash? Freezer-cooking can be addictive like that).

Freezer Bags: Opt for high-quality disposable bags (less chance of losing your meals to spills) or go for eco-friendly reusable bags.

Freezer Bag Holder: Not strictly necessary, but when you see it you'll wonder how you lived without it.

Freezable Containers: You may want to use plastic- or glass-lidded containers for some of your items. They take up more space, but sometimes are more secure. They are also fantastic for single-serving freezer meals.



Freezer Meal Shopping List

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Foil

Plastic Wrap Parchment Paper: You will need this for some baking items. It's wonderful for keeping individual items from sticking together in the freezer.

Labels: Be sure to date all of your meals for safety.

Food Saver: Another item that isn't really necessary, but it is wonderful for packaging meals, seasonal produce or wild game.

Prep Tools

Food Processor: Helpful for large batches of your favorite recipes. We like the larger models with attachments for slicing, dicing and shredding. But you could also consider smaller models or manual tools like a mandolin slicer.

Prep Bowls: Prep all of your ingredients first and you'll fly through the recipe like a cooking show host! Or use or Storage Containers if you want to do some of the chopping and other prep the day before and store in the fridge until you're ready to cook.

Knives: Every cook needs a sharp set.

Cutting Boards: We recommend having several and dedicating some to meats and others to veggies for food safety.

Mixer: Stand mixers are a wonderful tool, but you could also use a handheld version.

Blender or Immersion Blender: Some people like to have both for different tasks.

Vegetable Peeler: A must have in every kitchen.

Meat Tenderizer: Not always needed, but widens your recipe choices.

Cooking and Baking

Rice Cooker: Prep large batches of rice and freeze in portions for meals or a quick side dish.

Slow Cooker: Prep large batches of soups, stews, and roasts for freezing. When bulk cooking, you can prep easy assembly meals that are simply dumped into the slow cooker on the morning you want to eat them.

Baking Sheets: Rimmed and flat. You will need 2 or more for bulk cooking.

Freezer Meal Shopping List

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Loaf Pans: Two or more (or foil for easy freezing).

Roasting Pans: You'll need one or two for roasting meats and veggies.

Glass Baking Dishes or Casserole Dishes: These can be used on cooking day, and they can also be frozen if you have enough of them.

Foil Baking Pans: You can opt for disposable baking pans to make life easier.

Plastic Ovenware: These are helpful as they can go from freezer, to microwave, to oven and are easily disposable.

Muffin Tins: You need two or more. Make sure you have disposable liners.

Silicone Baking Cups: These can be used to line your muffin tins. They're also great for baking or freezing individual portions of dishes and ingredients.

Large Skillets: If you're making larger batches large skillets make it way easier.

Large Pots: For your large batches of stock, soups and sauces, you'll need at least one of these.

Saucepans: You will need 2 or more of this kitchen staple.

Colander: 2 or more.

Cooling Racks: 2 or more.

Extras

Folding Tables: Helpful if you have limited counter space. You can use this as a holding area for ingredients, a cooling and packaging station or to get your slow cookers off of the counters.

Kitchen Mats and Comfy Shoes: You want to be as comfortable as possible so that you stay standing until the end of your cooking day.

Kitchen Timer: Hugely helpful when you have multiple dishes cooking at once.

Extra Prep Bowls or Storage Containers: Since your prep will be done the night before, you'll need bowls or containers to store your prepped ingredients until cooking day.

Extra Measuring and Mixing Tools: It's super helpful to have extra sets when you're working on many recipes at a time, especially if there's more than one cook in the kitchen.

Freezer Meal Shopping List

Continued from previous page

Measuring Spoons: 2 sets or more

Dry Measuring Cups: 2 sets or more

Liquid Measuring Cups: 2 sets or more

Mixing Bowls: Look especially for large sizes.

Spoons: Wooden spoons are best. You'll want many in different shapes and sizes.

Spatulas: For scraping and flipping. You'll want many in different shapes and sizes.

Whisks: 3 or more

Phew! That's a lot of stuff. We bet you probably have most if it already? What are you missing? What do you need? What do you just plain want?



Can a Freezer Meal be Delicious? Yes!

By Kim Coleman

Learn how to make freezer meals that taste as delicious as freshly made.

It's true. Freezer meals can be delicious. I mean, doesn't this lasagna look good?

But it goes beyond lasagna. You can make all kinds of meals for the freezer. For instance, here's a real menu that I served to my family for Christmas dinner:

- [Easy Butternut Soup](#)
- Greens with Dried Fruit, Candied Walnuts, and Blue Cheese
- [Citrus-Glazed Cornish Game Hens](#)
- [Rosemary Garlic Roasted Potatoes](#)
- Roasted Brussels Sprouts

Delicious Freezer Meals

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I didn't lose my mind. I sat and enjoyed the food with them. We laughed and drank and there wasn't even that much clean up. How did I pull it off? Everything, but the salad, was made ahead of time and in my freezer.

Entertaining friends, sitting down with your loved ones for a regular meal or simply cooking for yourself after a long day of working hard - all of these occasions deserve real, delicious food. Thankfully, your freezer can make this a reality. With a little planning and some freezer prep secrets, you'll be dining in the comfort of your home and without the restaurant price tag.

Choose Quality Ingredients

Anyone who has studied cooking knows that good food starts with the best ingredients you can get your hands on. The same is true when freezer cooking, if not more important and advantageous.

Freezer cooking is the perfect way to eat peak-of-season produce at every meal. No more throwing out those beets that rotted in the bottom of the refrigerator drawer because you didn't know what to do with them. There are very few veggies that absolutely can't be frozen (think those with high water content). Go to farms that let you pick and purchase, buy from local farms or even grow your own crops, and make a list of freezer-friendly recipes using what you have. Stir fry bags, smoothies, soups, pies and even side dishes are all great ways to preserve freshness.

You can follow the same plan for quality meats. Often you can save a bundle when you buy locally or in bulk. Ever wanted to purchase a cow (or part of one) but didn't know if it was worth it? If you take a day to prepare and freeze some full meals, then you never have to wonder what to do with it all. Use your own favorite recipes or a site like [Once a Month Meals](#) to search for freezer-friendly recipes and create custom menu planning and instructional documents.

Package Meals to Maintain Quality

The most common concern with freezer cooking is that the quality of ingredients or the finished dish will lessen. But if a few simple steps are followed when packaging and thawing, I doubt anyone will know the food was ever in the freezer.

1. Consider purchasing a separate freezer for your freezer meals. Frequent opening and closing of your regular refrigerator freezer can cause freezer burn. Manual defrosting chest freezers are actually best as they maintain temperature better and they do not remove humidity, which causes frozen foods to dry out.

Delicious Freezer Meals

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2. Opt for high-quality freezer containers so you don't experience leaks, tears or freezer burn. Use disposable or reusable containers that are designed specifically for the freezer.
3. Allow food to completely cool before you place it in the freezer. Cool one-pot dishes on the counter or flash freeze individual servings. Placing warm or hot foods into the freezer causes freezer burn or mushy baked goods because of steam build-up in the containers.
4. Wrap foods appropriately. Make use of freezer paper, plastic wrap and aluminum foil to seal your foods.
5. Eat your food within 3-6 months of freezing. Most foods will last longer, especially in a deep freezer. However, the sooner you eat the foods, the better the quality will be. Keep an inventory sheet and plan to eat your older meals first.
6. Thaw your freezer meals gradually in the refrigerator or in cold water. Avoid the microwave or other quick thawing methods as these can result in separation, changes in texture or breaking of ingredients that are supposed to remain whole.

Package the Appropriate Serving Size

Freezer cooking is adaptable. You can cook a slow cooker full of soup for entertaining or you can freeze individual servings to take to the office. You can create on-the-go breakfasts or even side dishes to share at a potluck.

Remember how I cooked my Christmas dinner ahead of time? My guests were in for a few days. So ahead of time, I made some casseroles and baked goods for Christmas breakfast and pre-cooked some simple meals and holiday treats.

I often use freezer cooking to feed my family of four or to prepare single-serving meals when following special diets. Adapting freezer meals is as simple as doing a little bit of elementary school math or using a site, such as [Once a Month Meals](#), which allows you to choose your serving size and adjusts all of your recipes and resources accordingly.

With these tips, you can make the most of flavor from your freezer. I can't wait for you to try it and let me know how delicious your freezer meals turned out!



Tropical Salmon with Mango-Avocado Salsa and Rice

By Kim Coleman

This ain't Gramma's frozen tuna casserole! This freezer-meal-salmon gets a tropical makeover with a mango and avocado salsa.

The old way of making meals for the freezer was to do a big fully-cooked casserole, freeze then reheat. The modern take on freezer meals is quite different. The goal is great-tasting food with little effort on the day you're eating it. For today's twist, you actually do cook a little bit on serving day. But we promise, it's only for a few minutes.

When you're thinking about making delicious freezer meals, remember that not everything has to be pre-cooked. Some ingredients are best frozen raw and then cooked at the last minute. When it comes to fish, it's best to flavor the raw fish (with a rub or marinade) and then freeze it raw. On eating day, you can defrost it and panfry it OR you can bake it straight from frozen. (See page 22.)

For this salmon recipe, you premake a side dish of jasmine rice and beans as well as a mango and avocado salsa. The raw salmon gets a jerk rub before being frozen. To serve, defrost everything. Then heat the rice and beans and quickly panfry the salmon. Top with the salsa.

Tropical Salmon

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Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

1 lb. salmon fillet
1 1/2 Tbsp. jerk seasoning
1/4 tsp. sea salt
2 c. cooked jasmine rice
15 oz. canned black beans,
drained and rinsed
1/4 tsp. sea salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper
2 c. peeled, pitted and diced
mango
2/3 c. diced red onion
2 Tbsp. chopped cilantro
1 c. peeled, pitted and diced
avocado
1 tsp. lime juice
1 Tbsp. olive oil, for serving
2 gal. freezer bags
1 qt. freezer bags

Cooking directions

1. Rub salmon fillet all over with jerk seasoning and 1/4 tsp. sea salt.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add salmon skin side down and cook 3–5 minutes until browned. Flip salmon and cook on meat side 3–5 minutes until browned. Remove skin and break salmon into pieces. Cook until no longer translucent. (Remove from heat as soon as it is done so that it doesn't dry out.)
3. In a large bowl toss together cooked rice, black beans, 1/4 tsp. salt and pepper. Set aside.
4. In another bowl toss together mango, onion, cilantro, avocado, and lime juice.
5. Layer rice and beans onto each plate or bowl, top with salmon, and then finish off with mango salsa.

Freezing directions

6. Rub salmon fillet with the jerk seasoning and sea salt. Divide filets among half of the gallon bags.
7. In a large bowl mix the cooked rice, black beans, salt and pepper. Divide mixture between the remaining half of the gallonbags. Place this bag inside of the bag with the salmon.
8. In another bowl combine the mango, onion, cilantro, avocado, and lime juice. Divide among the quart bags and place inside the bag with the salmon. Label and freeze.

Tropical Salmon

Continued from previous page

Serving day directions

9. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add salmon skin side down and cook until browned, about 3-5 minutes. Flip cook on meat side until browned, 3.5 minutes. Remove skin and break salmon into pieces. Cook until no longer translucent and remove from heat immediately.
10. Meanwhile, reheat rice and beans. Divide rice and beans among dinner plates and then top with salmon with mango salsa.

Recipe and photo courtesy of [Once a Month Meals](#)



15 Delicious Ingredients You Didn't Know You Could Freeze

By Kim Coleman

The freezer isn't just for pizza pockets and ice cubes. You can freeze all kinds of delicious ingredients so that you always have them when it's time to cook.

Freeze these 15 ingredients to make quick dinners. All can be frozen as part of a cooked, finished dish (we'll give you some suggestions), but many can be frozen alone and added later.

Freezable Ingredients

Continued from previous page

1. AVOCADOS

Before they go from perfectly ripe to disgustingly mushy, you can freeze avocados. Mash them with lemon juice (1 tablespoon per avocado) and then pull them out to use in guacamole, smoothies or for other recipes. This tip doesn't work if you want sliced avocado, but if it's going into a recipe, no one will know the difference.

Try it in:

- [AIP Summer Squash Salad](#) (but mashed instead of sliced as the recipe specifies)
- [Breakfast Guacamole](#)

2. FRESH HERBS

Chop up fresh herbs, add water, oil or vinegar and freeze the mixture in an ice cube tray. Use in everything, from soups to marinades. Or to add flavor to fancy drinks. Here's another tip. Pesto, sauces, dressings and other homemade ingredients can be frozen for later use too.

Try it in:

- [15 Minute Gazpacho](#)
- [Whole Foods Pesto Sauce](#)

3. MUSHROOMS

This versatile and flavorful vegetable can be sliced or diced and flash frozen. Or it can be used in veggie mixtures, stir fry bags, sauces and gravies.

Try it in:

- [From Scratch Green Bean Casserole](#)
- [Homemade Cream of Mushroom Soup](#)

- [World Famous Beef Stroganoff](#)

4. TOMATOES

Most cooks think of preserving tomatoes by canning, but freezing is just as effective and saves tons of time and effort. You aren't going to use them to top a fancy salad, but you can enjoy them in soups, sauces, casseroles, skillet dishes and more. Put whole tomatoes in a zip-top bag. After they've been frozen, and slightly defrosted, the skins will pop right off. Cool, right?

Try it in:

- [5-Minute Homemade Salsa](#)
- [Baked Chicken with Tomatoes, Basil and Red Chillies](#)

5. CITRUS

Use up your fruit before it's overripe. Zest or juice your citrus and freeze. You can use this similar to the fresh herbs, but you can also freeze citrus in smoothie bags for easy breakfasts. Flash freeze slices and put them in punch bowls or use as icy garnishes for drinks.

Try it in:

- [Strawberry Orange Smoothie](#)
- [Mango Chipotle Lime BBQ Sauce](#)

Freezable Ingredients

Continued from previous page

6. LEMONGRASS

I don't know about you, but I sometimes have a hard time finding fresh lemongrass. When I do see it, I want to buy a bunch, but I know it won't keep. Enter the freezer. Pull whole frozen lemongrass stalks from the freezer to season Asian-inspired broths and curries. Or you can grind it into a paste and freeze to use as a seasoning or marinade.

Try it in:

- [Copycat Kashi Lemongrass Coconut Chicken](#)
- [Thai Curry](#)

7. GINGER

I usually keep my ginger in the refrigerator because I can never use up the whole root before it goes bad. But it keeps even longer in the freezer! Simply pull it out and grate or slice with a sharp knife without thawing, and put it back into the freezer for next time.

Try it in:

- [Asian Oven-Baked Risotto](#)
- [Spiced Pear Breakfast Hand Pie](#)

8. CHEESE

You aren't going to use defrosted cheese for your cheese tray, but you can create some amazing dishes using cheese and other dairy products without sacrificing quality. With slow, gradual thawing and possibly a little gentle stirring, you shouldn't see any separation.

Try it in:

- [Easy Hot Beer Cheese Dip](#)
- [Buffalo Bleu Cheese Burgers](#)

9. YOGURT

This is absolutely doable. If you have a large tub of yogurt that you don't think you'll get through before it expires or if you made your own batch of homemade yogurt and don't want any to go to waste, you can freeze it for later. This is one you can absolutely eat as you normally would. Or you can freeze it in ice cube trays for smoothies, Popsicles and for baked goods.

Try it in:

- [Strawberry Basil Frozen Yogurt](#) (No ice cream maker necessary!)
- [Ginger Yogurt Parfaits with Cinnamon Pears](#)

10. RICE

I always thought it was strange to freeze rice, until I started seeing it in the grocery aisle. Why not cook it ahead and portion it out yourself? It especially saves time for varieties with longer cooking times, like brown rice or risotto. Oh, and if you order Chinese food and they send all that plain white rice that nobody eats (because you're all digging into the tastier fried rice!) put the containers of white in the freezer to add to a soup later in the week.

Try it in:

- [Diet Santa Fe Beans and Rice](#)
- [Coconut Curry Soup with Rice and Shrimp](#)

Freezable Ingredients

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11. PASTA

Whether you're taking the time to make it by hand or painstakingly assembling your family's secret lasagna recipe, pasta keeps well in the freezer. It is best if you cook the pasta al dente and then freeze it separately from sauces or soups. This is so that it doesn't soak up the liquid and become mushy. However, in the case of lasagnas or other casseroles, bake before freezing and simply reheat.

Try it in:

- [Lasagna Rolls with Chicken Cordon Bleu and Kale Filling](#)
- [Tortellini Italian Salad](#)
- [Spinach and Walnut Ravioli with Alfredo Sauce](#)

12. HOMEMADE DRESSINGS AND SAUCES

We've listed quite a few ideas along the way, but I thought these deserved their own place. You can be ready to serve guests a gourmet, handmade meal at any time by shopping your freezer for these ingredients instead of heading to the pantry aisle of the grocery store.

13. CHOCOLATE

There is nothing better than good-quality chocolate for dessert. But did you know that you can make these treats ahead of time and freeze them? The trick to maintaining quality is to cool your chocolate slowly by refrigerating and then moving to it the freezer.

Try it in:

- [Individual Chocolate Raspberry Cream Pies](#)
- [White Chocolate Bark with Blueberries, Pine Nuts, and Lemon](#)
- [Salted Chocolate Nutella Cookies](#)

14. WINE

I have a hard time imagining a situation where I would have leftover wine, but I guess it could happen. Maybe you just opened a bottle and didn't love it for sipping, but don't want to waste it. You can easily freeze small portions in an ice cube tray and whip up one of these recipes.

Try it in:

- [Coq Au Vin](#)
- [Easy Apple Tart with Raspberries, Thyme and Wine](#)

15. SEAFOOD

I know a lot of cooks get snobby about fresh seafood, but if you take proper care of your ingredients you won't know the difference. This is a great way to add some nutrition and variety to your diet when fresh seafood isn't readily available or affordable.

- [Buffalo Cod with Ranch Alfredo Sauce](#) (the fish is cooked straight from the freezer, not even defrosted, for this one!)
- [Pure and Simple Crab Cakes](#)

Pork Chops with Balsamic Mushroom Sauce

By Kim Coleman

These pork chops are perfect for a date-night at home. It's all about the balsamic mushroom sauce. Oh, and that you make it all ahead so that you can talk and sip together.

Freezer meals aren't just for busy weeknights with the family. They can also be used to make date nights at home easy and stress-free.

For this date-worthy dinner, the pork is pre-seared and the mushroom sauce is pre-mixed and pre-simmered. Fast forward to date night, and you cook both for 7-8 minutes. That's it. That's all.

Add a tossed salad and some quick-cooking couscous. There you have it, date night in a flash!



Pork Chops

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Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

2 lbs. boneless pork chops
1/4 cup whole wheat flour
2 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
1 Tbsp. olive oil
1/2 cup diced onion
1 1/2 cup diced red bell pepper
1 cup sliced mushrooms
3 tsp. minced garlic cloves
1 3/4 cups beef broth
3 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
1/2 tsp. dried basil
1/8 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. black pepper
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley, for serving day

Freezer Containers:

1 gal. freezer bags

Cooking directions

1. Dredge pork chops in flour to coat and reserve remaining flour.
2. Heat 2 Tbsp. olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Sear pork chops for about 2 minutes each side, then remove to a plate.
3. Add 1 Tbsp. olive oil to pan and reduce heat to medium. Add onions and bell peppers and saute about 5 minutes until they begin to soften. Add mushrooms and garlic and saute another 2-3 minutes.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together reserved flour, beef broth, balsamic vinegar, basil, salt and pepper.
5. Add broth mixture to the pan and stir scraping the bottom of the pan. Place pork chops (and any juices from the plate) in the broth and bring to a simmer. Cover, reduce heat to medium low, and cook pork 10 minutes, turning half way through cooking time. Sprinkle with parsley.

Freezing directions

6. Dredge pork chops in flour to coat and reserve remaining flour. Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sear pork chops for about 2 minutes on each side, then transfer to a plate.
7. Add remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil to the pan and reduce heat to medium. Add onions and bell peppers and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes. Add mushrooms and garlic and sauté another 2-3 minutes.
8. In a small bowl, combine together reserved flour, beef broth, balsamic vinegar, basil, salt and pepper.

Pork Chops

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9. Add flour mixture to the pan and stir scraping from the bottom of the pan. Place pork chops (and any juices from the plate) in the broth and bring to a simmer. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook pork 10 minutes, turning half way through cooking time. Allow pork and sauce to cool. Divide among freezer bags, label and lay flat to freeze

Serving Day Directions

10. Reheat on stovetop for 8-10 minutes, until warmed through. Sprinkle with parsley.

Recipe and photo courtesy of [Once a Month Meals](#)



How To Cook Chicken and Fish from Frozen

By Christine Pittman

Did you forget to pull out something for dinner tonight? No problem. You can cook chicken and fish straight from the freezer if you follow our method.

I always forget to thaw my chicken breasts. Every. Single. Time. Then dinner rolls around and I'm forced to use the microwave. Defrosting meat in the microwave sucks though. It ends up a bit cooked on the outside while still frozen in the middle.

I don't bother anymore, not since I learned that you can cook chicken breasts from frozen. You can even bread them frozen and they end up with a crunchy crust.

I know it sounds odd to cook anything from frozen but really, don't worry. [The USDA says it's safe](#) (it's at the very end of the Safe Thawing section). Frozen poultry takes about 1 1/2 times longer to cook than fresh poultry. The USDA also reminds you to remove the giblets from a frozen bird before cooking. These must be cooked separately.

Cooking from Frozen

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HOW TO COOK FROZEN CHICKEN

STEP 1

I prefer to use boneless chicken breasts or boneless thighs when cooking from frozen because they're quicker. What you need to do is freeze the chicken pieces separately. Basically, you get them home from the grocery store and then put them in a single layer on a plate or tray and freeze. Once they're frozen, package them together in a zip-top freezer bag.

STEP 2

To cook them, take them out of the freezer and put them on a baking sheet in a single layer. Season with salt and pepper or whatever you'd like. Brush on some sauce or salad dressing.

STEP 3

Bake at 425°F until they've reached an internal temperature of 165°F. That will take 1.5 times as long as it would take if you were cooking them fresh. It's about 30–40 minutes for boneless skinless chicken breasts and boneless skinless chicken thighs.

I particularly love this recipe [for breaded chicken from frozen](#). So good.

HOW TO COOK FROZEN FISH

STEP 1

Frozen fish is even easier. I buy the fish already frozen and individually packaged. Do you know what I mean? You get a big zip-top bag and inside are a bunch of individually plastic-wrapped fish fillets. If you don't get these, you'll need to do what you did for the chicken above: Put the fish fillets in a single layer on a plate or pan and freeze. Once frozen, transfer to a zip-top bag.

STEP 2

Get the fish fillets out of the freezer. Rinse off any ice crystals, pat dry and then arrange in a single layer on a pan. Season and/or brush with sauce.

Cooking from Frozen

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STEP 3

Bake at 450°F. The fillets, like the chicken breasts, will take about 1.5 times as long to cook as when fresh. This depends on the thickness and type of fish that you've got but you're looking at around 15-25 minutes.

Here's my favorite way to [cook fish from frozen](#). It's an oven-baked breaded fish with a very crispy crust.

Thai Peanut Salad

By Kim Coleman

A salad for the freezer? Yes! This Thai Peanut Salad freezes perfectly for a delicious make ahead dinner that you just defrost and eat.

For this Asian salad, shredded cabbage is combined with a homemade peanut sauce and cooked chicken. These ingredients all freeze very well making this the perfect meal to pre-make. The best thing about this freezer meal is that it doesn't even have to be reheated. Defrost and eat.



Thai Peanut Salad

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Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

1/4 cup soy sauce
1/4 cup rice vinegar
2 Tbsp. water
1 Tbsp. honey
1 Tbsp. peanut butter
2 tsp. cayenne pepper sauce
2 cups cooked red quinoa
1 1/2 cups cooked and shredded chicken
2 tsp. coconut oil
1 1/2 cups shredded cabbage or coleslaw mix
1/2 cup frozen peas
1/4 cup sliced scallions
1/2 tsp. sesame oil
1/2 cup chopped peanuts

Freezer Containers:

4 quart freezer bags

Cooking directions

1. In a microwave-safe bowl whisk together the soy sauce, rice vinegar, water, honey, peanut butter and hot chili sauce. Microwave 30 seconds. Whisk well again to make sure all ingredients are incorporated.
2. In a large skillet over medium heat, melt coconut oil. Add the cabbage, peas and green onions to the skillet and stir fry. To the skillet add sesame oil, chicken, quinoa and the half of the sauce. Cook until warmed through. Add remaining sauce and peanuts, stirring until combined.

Freezing directions

3. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely. Divide between the freezer bags, label and freeze.

Serving Day Directions

4. Reheat for 60 seconds in microwave or enjoy cold.

Recipe and photo courtesy of [Once a Month Meals](#)



Freezer Pasta Salad for Quick Packed Lunches

By Christine Pittman

Frozen pasta salad? Yeah. It's so cool (haha!). You freeze cooked pasta, chicken and veggies. For a quick packed lunch, take it out frozen, drizzle with salad dressing and go. It defrosts by lunchtime.

Pasta salad is a good option for lunch at the office or for the kids' lunchboxes. A good whole wheat pasta will give you a full carb feeling with staying power. Some chicken and legumes are in there for protein. And don't forget to add some veggies.

This pasta salad is cooler than most. It's frozen (haha). You cook up the pasta and chicken. Toss them together with cooked veggies or frozen ones and freeze in lunch portions. To get your grab-and-go lunch, pull out the portion, put it in your lunch container, drizzle it with dressing (ranch and Italian are my faves) and go. It will defrost by lunchtime. It makes for a hearty and filling lunch that will prevent hunger pains at 3 p.m and will avoid the guilt of stalking the vending machine's candy bars.

Freezer Pasta Salad

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Yield: 12 servings

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

1 (16 oz.) package of penne or rotini

12 oz. broccoli florets

1 lb. crinkle cut carrots

1 lb. cooked chicken breast, chopped

1 red bell pepper, finely chopped

1 (14.5 oz.) can great northern or cannellini beans, drained and rinsed

1 (14.5 oz.) can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed

3 Tbsp. Italian salad dressing or olive oil (plus more for serving)

Freezer Containers:

4 quart freezer bags

Cooking directions

1. Cook the pasta according to package directions except, 4 minutes before it's cooked, add the broccoli and the carrots (depending on the size of the pot you're using, you may need to remove some water first to make room for the vegetables). Put the pot back on high and cook for the remaining time. Drain. Return the pasta and vegetable to the pot and cover with lots of cold water. Drain and repeat until pasta is cold.
2. In a very big bowl, combine the pasta and vegetable mixture with the chicken, bell pepper, 2 cans of beans and 3 tablespoons of the salad dressing. (You can use plain olive oil if you want).
3. Divide the pasta salad among 3(1 gallon) zip top bags. Seal the bags and then lay them flat in the freezer. Every hour or two, shake them around so that the bits do not freeze together but instead freeze individually or in very small clumps.
4. Once the pasta salad is completely frozen, take each bag out of the freezer and drop it lightly onto a hard surface to further ensure that everything is in small pieces.
5. To serve: In the morning put some of the pasta salad into a lunch container. Optionally drizzle with more salad dressing (1/2- 1 Tbsp. is sufficient for a lunch portion). Seal the box and put it into the lunchbox. It will defrost by lunch time. You can also defrost the pasta salad in the refrigerator overnight or in the microwave in the morning before packing.



Peanut Butter Cup Ice Cream Pie

By Christine Pittman

Every fabulous freezer meal needs a fabulous freezer dessert. This Ice Cream Pie is a snap to make and will wait in your freezer for ages. But we're pretty sure you'll eat it all before then!

We've been focusing on entrées so far but your freezer can be a place to stash desserts as well. Sweet!

So many desserts freeze brilliantly. Cakes, brownies and cookies not only stand up to the freezer, they also defrost really quickly. Package them in individual portions before freezing. Then pull them out when you get home and they'll be defrosted by the time you're finished eating dinner.

Pies freeze well too, especially ice cream pies like this Peanut Butter Cup Ice Cream Pie. This one you don't want to defrost before eating though. And you don't need to individually portion it either since you can slice it while it's still frozen. An ice cream pie like this is a great thing to have in your freezer for a regular weeknight dessert or to pull out if you have friends over and they stay later than expected. Ice cream pie at 2 a.m.? Heck yeah!

Peanut Butter Cup Ice Cream Pie

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Yield: 8 servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

2 cups vanilla ice cream,
softened a little
1 pie crust (9-inch) baked
according to package or
recipe instructions and
cooled
15-20 peanut butter cup
miniatures, unwrapped
2 Tbsp. peanut butter,
warmed
1 gallon zip top bag
2 Tbsp. chocolate sauce (Try
the stuff that gets hard
when it hits ice cream)

Freezer Containers:

4 quart freezer bags

Cooking directions

1. Spread the ice cream into the prepared pie crust. Depending on how you measured you may not need all of it. You want it to not quite fill the pie shell.
2. Distribute the peanut butter cups evenly in a single layer over the ice cream and then push them down so that they are mostly submerged but still sticking up a bit.
3. Spoon the peanut butter into the bag. Cut a tiny bit of one bottom corner off of the bag. Squeeze the bag so that the peanut butter can drizzle out of the hole. Drizzle peanut butter all over the pie.
4. If your chocolate sauce has a drizzle-able spout, use that to drizzle on some chocolate sauce. If not, repeat the bag procedure but put chocolate sauce in the bag instead of peanut butter and drizzle it on.
5. Put the pie into the freezer for at least 2 hours. Cut and serve or cover with plastic wrap and store in the freezer for up to 1 month.

101 Freezable Recipes for Making Fabulous Meals

By Amy Bowen

Freezer meals have come a long way. You can prepare homemade delicious meals using fresh ingredients. We hope you're hungry because we've got 101 freezer recipes for you to try.

Freezer meals have come a long way, baby. You can prepare homemade gourmet meals using seasonal ingredients. Then put them in the freezer so you have them ready when life gets busy. Here's 101 freezable recipes to try.

Bread

1. [Homemade Freezer Biscuits](#)
2. [Cinnamon Pear Popovers](#)

Breakfast

3. [Ham and Cheese Breakfast Sandwiches](#)
4. [Broccoli Cheddar Hashbrown Casserole](#)
5. [Make-Ahead Frozen Breakfast Burritos](#)
6. [Breakfast Rolls](#)
7. [Oatmeal Cups](#)

Chicken

8. [Lemon Garlic Dump Chicken](#)

9. [Chicken and Wild Rice Bake](#)

10. [Garlic Lime Chicken](#)

11. [Herb Roasted Chicken](#)

12. [Slow Cooker Chicken and Gravy](#)

13. [Freezer Chicken Pot Pie](#)

14. [Hawaiian Chicken](#)

15. [Lemon Pesto Chicken](#)

16. [Avocado Chicken Enchilada Casserole](#)

17. [White Chicken Enchilada Bake](#)

18. [Bacon-Wrapped Chicken with Rosemary](#)

19. [Sesame Chicken Potstickers](#)

20. [Swiss Cheese Chicken](#)

21. [Chicken, Sweet Potato and Butternut Squash](#)

22. [Cranberry Chicken](#)

23. [Chicken Stuffing Bake](#)

24. [Easy Freezer Meatballs](#)

25. [Apple Chicken Nuggets](#)

26. [Chicken and Black Bean Freezer Burritos](#)

27. [Pulled Tandoori Chicken](#)

28. [Low-Carb Chicken Enchilada Casserole](#)

29. [Cilantro Lime Chicken](#)

30. [Tomato Chicken Parmesan](#)

31. [Chicken Broccoli Rice](#)

32. [Thai Peanut Salad](#)

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34. [Ground Beef Enchilada Casserole](#)
35. [Simple Freezer Meatloaf](#)
36. [Slow Cooker Hawaiian Style Sloppy Joes](#)
37. [Sloppy Tamale Pie](#)
38. [Mini Bacon Cheeseburger Calzones](#)
39. [Beef N Bean Burritos](#)
40. [Thai Curry with Beef Brisket](#)
41. [Sheperd's Pie](#)
42. [Mongolian Beef](#)
43. [BBQ Meatballs](#)
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46. [Wine and Pomegranate Brisket](#)
47. [Cheesy Tater Tot Casserole](#)
48. [Slow Cooker Italian Beef](#)

49. [Cheesy Beef and Pasta Casserole](#)

50. [Beef and Broccoli](#)

51. [Pot Roast](#)

Fish

52. [Tuna Casserole](#)

53. [Tuna Casserole Stuffed Shells](#)

54. [Tropical Salmon with Rice and Salsa](#)

Pasta

55. [Baked Spaghetti](#)

56. [Beefy Baked Ravoli](#)

57. [Baked Penne with Chicken and Sun Dried Tomatoes](#)

58. [Butternut Squash Lasagna](#)

59. [Pumpkin Macaroni and Cheese](#)

60. [Zucchini Pizza Lasagna](#)

61. [Baked Ziti](#)

62. [Chicken Broccoli Alfredo](#)

63. [Beef Stroganoff Casserole](#)

64. [Chicken Manicotti](#)

65. [Freezer Pasta Salad](#)

Pork

66. [Pork Loin](#)

67. [Country Style BBQ Ribs](#)

68. [-Ingredient Slow Cooker Ranch Pork Chops](#)

69. [Cranberry Pork Roast](#)

70. [Carnitas](#)

71. [Pork Chops with Apples](#)

72. [Sweet Potato and Ham Burgers](#)

73. [Rosemary Pot Roast](#)

74. [Guinness Pulled Pork](#)

75. [Mustard Pulled Pork](#)

76. [Pulled Pork Sandwiches](#)

77. [Slow Cooker Spicy Brown Rice with Sausage and Peppers](#)

78. [Pork with Mushroom Sauce](#)

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79. [Garden Veggie Soup with Ground Beef](#)

80. [Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup](#)

81. [Taco Soup](#)

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| 83. Slow Cooker Beef Chorizo Chili | 89. Coconut Chicken Soup | 96. Freezer Tomato Sauce |
| 84. Slow Cooker Red Lentil Soup | 90. Smoky Butternut Squash and Carrot Soup | 97. Freezer Friendly Falafel |
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| 87. Mexican Pork and Sweet Potato Stew | 92. Stuffed Acorn Squash | 99. Spooky Apple Pizza |
| | 93. Sweet Potato Black Bean Burgers | 100. Mint Chocolate Freezer Brownies |
| | 94. Chana Masala | 101. Peanut Butter Cup Ice Cream Pie |

Contributors

Many thanks to our writers for this edition of The Cookful.



Christine Pittman

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Christine is the Founder and Senior Editor of The Cookful. She also blogs at COOKtheSTORY where she specializes in easy healthy homemade recipes. Healthiness aside, she has been known to shred cheese onto a dinner plate, microwave it for 30 seconds, and then eat the messy goop with a spoon.



Amy Bowen

Amy admits that she had no clue how to cook until she became the food reporter for a daily newspaper in Minnesota. At 25, she even struggled with figuring out boxed mac and cheese. These days, Amy is a much better cook, thanks to interviewing cooks and chefs for more than 10 years. She even makes four cheese macaroni and cheese with bacon, no boxed mac in sight. Amy is also on the editorial team at The Cookful and is the primary editor for this ebook.



Kim Coleman

Cooking is one of Kim's passions, and she loves to hunt for recipes, experiment with them, and share them. The journey of pregnancy, nursing, and introducing food to babies led Kim to whole foods (or "real food"), and she is still enjoying the journey. When she's not in the kitchen, she enjoys dating her husband, playing with her boys and reading.

About The Cookful

Do you love to geek-out over food and cooking? Then The Cookful is where you need to be.

We cook and write about one topic at a time, diving in deep to help you cook (and eat!) better than ever. Each topic comes with How-To's, innovative recipes, and a bunch of interesting tidbits so that you can learn all about it. Some topics we've covered are Margaritas, Quick Soups and Popcorn. Head over to [The Cookful](#) to find out what our next topic is and then get ready to go off the deep end with us.



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