

# Healthy Freezer Meals



## Freezer Tips

- Label well. Be sure to label each package with the date prepared, the name of the recipe, and preparation instructions so you don't need to scramble for the recipe on the day of serving.
- Never put hot food in the freezer.
- Freezer burn is essentially your food getting dehydrated because of the cold air. Quality freezer containers are moisture and vapor proof so they protect your food.
- Never re-freeze anything that's been frozen. Even if the food was frozen raw and then cooked, to be extra safe it still shouldn't be re-frozen.
- If in doubt, throw it out. Contrary to what many people think, freezing doesn't kill bacteria. If you are unsure of how long something has been frozen or are a bit wary of something once defrosted, don't take any chances.
- The 3 safest methods for thawing frozen food are in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave.

### What not to freeze...

- raw eggs in the shells will expand and crack
- Hard-boiled eggs go rubbery
- Vegetables with high water content, such as lettuce, cucumber, bean sprouts and radishes, go limp and mushy.
- Soft herbs, like parsley, basil and chives, go brown.
- Egg-based sauces, such as mayonnaise, will separate and curdle.
- Plain yogurt, low-fat cream cheese, single cream and cottage cheese go watery.

### Great to freeze...

- Butter and margarine can be frozen for 3 months.
- Grated cheese can be frozen for up to 4 months and can be used straight from the freezer.
- Most bread, except crusty varieties such as French bread, will freeze well for up to 3 months. Sliced bread can be toasted from frozen.
- Milk will freeze for 1 month. Defrost in the fridge and shake well before using.
- Raw pastry will freeze for 6 months and takes just 1 hour to thaw.

## Breakfast Recipes

### Freezer Oatmeal Cups

3 cups Chex Gluten Free oats

¼ cup brown or demerara sugar, or to taste

3 cups water

3 cups milk of choice

pinch salt

Assorted chopped fruit, nuts, chocolate chips, or other toppings

### Directions

Combine the oats, sugar, water, milk, and salt in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and cook for 2-3 minutes, or to desired consistency. Set aside to cool slightly. Spray two 12-cup muffin tins with cooking spray and set out toppings in bowls. Divide the cooked oatmeal between the muffin cups, and top each with desired toppings. Cover with plastic wrap and place in the freezer for several hours, or until frozen.

Once frozen, pop out of the muffin tins, loosening with a butter knife or small spatula, if necessary and wrap in sandwich bags or plastic wrap. Remove desired number of cups (one to three per serving) from the freezer the night before or day you plan to serve them. Warm in the microwave for 1-2 minutes (longer if still frozen), and stir in a little more milk, if desired.



## Smoothies

### Very Berry Smoothie

1 cup mango

1 cup strawberries

1 banana, sliced

liquid: ½ cup yogurt + ½ cup water

### Mango, Strawberry, & Banana Smoothie

1 cup blueberries

1 cup strawberries

1 banana, sliced

liquid: ½ cup water + ½ cup apple juice

### Berry Grape Smoothie

1 cup blueberries

1 cup strawberries

½ cup grapes

liquid: ½ cup yogurt + ½ cup water

### Tropical Bliss Smoothie

1 cup pineapple

1 cup mango

1 banana, sliced

liquid: 1 cup orange juice

## Directions

In labeled ziplock bags, combine the ingredients for each smoothie except the liquid. Keep bags in the freezer.

To use a freezer pack, add 1 cup liquid to the base of the blender followed by smoothie pack contents



## Lunch Recipes

### Hamburger Soup

6 cups cook Ground Beef

4 cups dice Onion

4 teaspoons mince Garlic, Cloves

8 cups peel and dice Yukon Gold Potato

10 cups dice Carrot

1 ½ cups dice Celery

62 ounces Diced Tomatoes, Garlic and Onions, Canned

2 teaspoons Italian Seasoning

96 fluid ounces Beef Broth/Stock

2 teaspoons Salt

3 teaspoons Black Pepper

16 Quart Freezer Bags (16 servings)

### Directions

Place meat, onion, garlic, potatoes, carrots, celery, and tomatoes in stockpot over medium high heat and cook for 30 minutes. Add in Italian seasoning, beef broth, salt and pepper. Cook for another 20 minutes. Allow to cool. Divide into indicated number of freezer bags. Label and freeze.

Serving Day Directions: Reheat in microwave for 1 minute or until warmed through.



## Dinner Recipes

### Chicken Broccoli Rice Casserole

10 cups cooked rice (white or brown)

4 cups cooked chicken, chopped (I bake mine in the oven like this.)

4 cups chopped broccoli, lightly steamed (can use frozen or fresh)

2 cans cream of mushroom soup (or 2 batches cream of mushroom soup)

2 cans cream of chicken soup (or 2 batches cream of chicken soup)

4 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:** Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well.

To freeze: Divide into four ziptop freezer bags and seal tightly. Freeze flat. To serve: Thaw overnight (or for 8 hours) in the refrigerator. Dump into a greased casserole dish (each bag will fill an 8x8-inch pan; two bags will fill a 9x13-inch pan). Sprinkle with additional shredded cheese, if desired.

Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes, or until heated through and bubbly.

This recipe makes around 15-18 servings. Each freezer bag serves 4-5 people.





## Baked Spaghetti Freezer Meal

- 1 Box of Pasta Cooked (Any Kind will work)
- ½ Cup of onion, chopped finely
- 2 Cups of Ground Beef Cooked (approx. 1 lb.)
- 2 Jars of Spaghetti Sauce
- 6 Slices Provolone Cheese
- 1 Cup sour cream
- 1 8 oz. Bag of Mozzarella cheese

### Directions

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add ziti pasta, and cook until al dente, about 7-8 minutes; drain.

In a large skillet, brown onion and ground beef over medium heat. Add spaghetti sauce, and simmer 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Spray 2 8x8 inch pans with non-stick cooking spray. Layer as follows in each pan: ¼ of the ziti, ¼ of the sauce, 4 slices of Provolone cheese, ½ of sour cream, ¼ of ziti, ¼ mozzarella cheese and ¼ of sauce mixture. Top with grated Parmesan cheese and remaining mozzarella cheese.

Bake covered for 30 minutes in the preheated oven, or until cheeses are melted.



## Freezer Meals Quiz

1. Which food items do not freeze safely?
  - a. eggs
  - b. bread
  - c. graded cheese
  - d. mayonnaise
2. Which of these options is not a safe method to thaw frozen food?
  - a. microwave
  - b. cold water
  - c. leaving on the counter
  - d. refrigerator
3. How long is butter and margarine safe to be frozen?
  - a. 1 month
  - b. 3 months
  - c. 6 months
  - d. 1 year
4. True or False? Freezer burn is food becoming dehydrated because of the cold air?
5. True or False? Freezing destroys bacteria and parasites.
6. True or False? The freezing process itself does not destroy nutrients.
7. True or False? Once a food has been frozen and thawed, you should not freeze it again
8. True or False? You can put hot food right into the freezer?



## Freezer Meal Quiz Answers

1. a, d
2. c
3. b
4. true
5. false
6. true
7. true
8. false

### Sources

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