

Biblical Hospitality: Freezing & Make-Ahead Recipes

Freezing

FREEZING:

- 1.) Process retards the growth of microorganisms and enzymes that cause food spoilage.
- 2.) For best results, never freeze items for more than 6-9 months.
- 3.) Date your bags or containers. Freezing does not lessen nutritional value.

TEN BASIC RULES of FREEZING:

1. **Containers (glass or plastic)** and wrapping such as saran wrap: **Label and date**
2. **Placement in freezer:** Do not overload but the fuller the freezer the more efficient the freezer- empty freezers are more expensive to operate.
3. **Move older packaging** forward when putting new products or glass containers in the freezer.
4. **Soups** and sauces (ex. spaghetti sauce): Freeze flat in gallon Ziploc bags. Once frozen, stand to save room
5. **Wrap meats** in freezer paper and label if in for a long time. **Do not leave** in foam trays with saran wrap.
6. **Freezer burn** will not harm you:
 - Result is too much air in packaging
 - Effects the texture and color: can causes food to become dehydrated, rather than keeping it fresh.
7. **Freezing Vegetables-** Some are better blanched, like Green beans, before freezing
8. **Freezing fresh fruit:** **Research first
 - If it is going to spoil, freeze it and save for using in a smoothie.
 - Keeps frozen 6-8 months. Running special on blueberries- buy bulk.
 - Some, like blueberries you are not to wash before freezing. Water will harden berries skin and could cause them to freeze stuck to one another.
9. **Freezing Baked Goods: Cookies, cupcakes.** Go ahead and roll cookie dough into balls- freeze on cookie sheet and then place in bag or container.

Cakes:

- Wrap warm layers in Saran Wrap, seals in moisture. Freeze flat.
- Layers are easier to ice when frozen- esp. a cake like Red Velvet with white cream cheese icing on it.

10. **Large Casserole recipes** can be divided, as well as soups and sauces then frozen in gallon Ziplock bags or glass casserole dishes.

Meats you can freeze:

- Larger cuts of meat can be cut, seasoned and divided- such as a large roast from Costco- pan sear, let cool, cut into three equal parts and wrap to freeze.
- Meatballs
- Hamburger Patties seasoned (better if they go from freezer to grill)
- Brown Italian sausage or hamburger- drain, cool and bag or place in glass container.
- Tenderize and Marinate chicken breasts, then freeze
- Butter: Yes, you can freeze butter. (When the store has a sale buy several and freeze.)

What NOT to Freeze:

Creamy desserts like pudding (custards)

Yogurt

Celery, lettuce, etc. (Vegetable with a great deal of moisture.)

Cheese: Can be frozen if once thawed placed in a casserole recipe, soup, etc. (It will crumble once thawed, you cannot slice and eat.)

THAWING: Three methods:

In refrigerator, water bath, or microwave (Be careful not to leave meats in too long, they will cook.))

Five Myths about Freezing

Myth #1: You Can Freeze All Foods

While it's true most edibles freeze under the right conditions, there are some that should never see the inside of your freezer.

Delicate vegetables like lettuce practically disintegrate when they're frozen then thawed.

Creamy sauces that are frozen separate and "break" or curdle when thawed. Even coffee shouldn't be stored in the freezer—especially dark roasts. The oils that make them so special break down in freezing temperatures, allowing the coffee to readily absorb off- flavors.

The USDA also advises not to freeze canned goods or eggs in their shell. (But you can freeze canned goods if they are removed from their original packaging, as well as eggs as long as they are removed from their shell.)

Myth #2: You Can Freeze Foods Indefinitely

This is true at least from a food-safety standpoint, but quality suffers the longer food is frozen. Here are some guidelines from the USDA as to how long to keep food in your freezer (at 0 degrees F) for optimal freshness:

- Soups, stews and casseroles: 2-3 months
- Cooked meat 2-3 months
- Uncooked steaks, roasts or chops: 4-12 months
- Cooked poultry: 4 months
- Uncooked poultry: 9-12 months

Of course how you store the item will lengthen or shorten its freezer life. Air coupled with moisture is the enemy of frozen food (think freezer burn), so if you can keep those two elements out you'll give your frozen foods a longer life. That's why I love the vacuum sealer. It sucks air out of the packaging so foods last longer than if they're just stored in plastic bags or their original packaging.

Myth #3: Freezing Kills Bacteria

Freezing foods renders bacteria inactive but doesn't actually kill anything. That means if your food went into the freezer contaminated, once thawed it will still harbor the same harmful bacteria. Cooking it to the recommended temperature is the only way to ensure that your food is safe.

Myth #4: Frozen Food Has Fewer Nutrients Than Fresh

Actually, the opposite can be true. Frozen fruits and vegetables may be even more healthful than some of the fresh produce sold in supermarkets because they tend to be processed at their peak ripeness, a time when, as a general rule, they are most nutrient-packed.

If you're worried about nutrient loss, eat your frozen fruits and veggies soon after purchase: over many months, nutrients in frozen vegetables do inevitably degrade.

Finally, steam or microwave rather than boil your produce to minimize the loss of water-soluble vitamins.

Myth #5: Once Thawed, Food Cannot Be Refrozen Without Cooking It First

You can freeze and refreeze to your heart's content as long as the food has not been left outside the fridge for more than 2 hours (or 1 hour in 90-degree heat).

One point to be aware of is that refreezing anything uncooked, especially meat, will degrade the quality due to the loss of moisture in the thawing process. So although it is technically safe to eat, from a culinary standpoint, it's best to avoid refreezing if at all possible.

Myth #6: You Can Store Frozen Food Long-Term Anywhere In Your Freezer or Anywhere That's Cold

The door of the freezer is a handy place to store frozen items, but not necessarily the best place for long-term storage.

The temperature near and on the door fluctuates every time the door is opened. Although the food may remain frozen, the freezing process could be slowed, opening up the possibility for larger ice crystals to form inside the food and destroy its integrity. To prevent this, store frozen foods toward the back of the freezer where a constant 0 degrees F is more likely to be achieved and use goods stored near the front or on the door sooner. And if the power goes out?

Don't open the freezer door! According to the USDA, a full freezer should remain frozen for 2 days. And if you're tempted to store your freezer overflow in a snowbank—don't. Even if the temperature is very cold, the sun can still heat up your frozen foods to dangerously warm temperatures. This is still an excellent way to store beer, though. So keep doing that.

Sweet and Nutty Chicken

½ cup butter, melted	¾ teaspoon garlic powder
⅓ cup apple juice or cider	½ teaspoon curry powder
¼ cup flour	⅛ teaspoon pepper
⅔ cup ground almonds	4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

In small pan, combine melted butter with apple juice. In shallow pan combine flour, ground almonds, and spices, mix well. Dip boneless, skinless chicken breasts into melted butter mixture; roll in flour mixture to coat. Place in greased baking pan and bake at 400 degrees F for 18-24 minutes.

For healthier dish: Do not use the flour in the dry dipping mixture or exchange white flour for whole wheat flour. Dip into butter and juice mixture, roll in ground almonds and spices, place in baking dish and drizzle with remainder of butter and juice mixture. Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 22 minutes Total Time: 32 minutes Yield: 4 servings

Mama's Chicken

This is how my mom prepared chicken when we were growing up. I love the simplicity of the recipe and the fabulous flavor. Frying to make a crisp crust, then baking ensures that the chicken will be moist and juicy too.

1 cut up chicken or four bone-in chicken breasts	¼ t pepper
1 cup buttermilk	1 cup flour
2 T Dijon mustard	¼ cup butter
1 t salt	¼ cup olive oil

Place chicken, on the bone and with skin, in a casserole dish. In small bowl, combine buttermilk, mustard, salt, and pepper and mix well. Pour over chicken, cover, and marinate in the fridge for 2-6 hours. When ready to eat, preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Place flour in a shallow dish. Put butter and olive oil into a large skillet but don't put over the heat yet. Remove chicken from marinade and wipe off excess marinade. Dip the chicken into the flour, coating thoroughly. Place on plate and let stand for 20 minutes. Turn on the heat under the skillet so the butter and olive oil heat up. When the oil sizzles when a drop of water is added, add the chicken, in batches, skin side down. Fry until deep golden brown, about 6-8 minutes. As the chicken browns, remove it from the skillet and place, skin side up, in a glass baking dish. When all the chicken is browned, place in the oven and bake for 20-25 minutes. Remove from oven, let stand for a few minutes, and serve. Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 35 minutes Total Time: 50 minutes Yield: Serves 6

Lemon and Spice Chicken

½ cup lemon juice	3 tablespoons mustard
4 tablespoons olive oil	¾ teaspoon salt
1 heaping tablespoon chili powder	¼ teaspoon white pepper
3-4 cloves garlic, minced	4-6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

Combine all ingredients except chicken in heavy-duty zip-lock food storage bag. Add chicken; close bag and zip to close. Place in bowl or baking dish and refrigerate for 2-6 hours. When ready to cook, prepare and preheat grill. Cook chicken for 12-17 minutes, turning once and brushing frequently with marinade, until chicken is thoroughly cooked. Discard remaining marinade. Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 15 minutes Total Time: 30 minutes Yield: Serves 4

Pesto and Cheese Stuffed Chicken Breast

¾ cup basil pesto, divided	3 tablespoons olive oil
4 tablespoon Ricotta cheese	2 tablespoons Italian seasoning
¼ teaspoon pepper	¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts	

In small bowl, combine 3 tablespoons pesto, ricotta, and pepper and mix well. Cut a pocket in the side of the thickest part of the each chicken breast. Stuff pesto mixture into the pocket and smooth closed; seal with a toothpick. Drizzle olive oil over the chicken. Sprinkle with Italian seasoning.

Prepare and preheat grill. Grill chicken for 4-5 minutes until it can be moved, then carefully turn and grill on second side for 3-5 minutes until juices run clear and chicken is thoroughly cooked. Remove toothpicks, top with remaining reserved pesto and parmesan cheese. Serve immediately. Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 10 minutes Total Time: 25 minutes Yield: 4 servings

Pesto Chicken

4 skinless, boneless, chicken breasts	1-8ounce cream cheese, room temperature
Salt and pepper	½ cup mozzarella cheese, grated
1 small jar pesto (6 ounces)	

Pre-heat oven to 375°. Place two chicken breasts in gallon-size Ziploc bag and tenderize with meat mallet until thin. Remove and repeat with last two breasts. Place in 9x11 baking dish. In medium bowl, mix soft cream cheese and the jar of pesto until well blended. Salt and pepper each side of the chicken breast, then spread topside with the pesto mixture. Top with grated cheese. Bake for 30 minutes until the breasts are cooked through and cheese is golden brown. Enjoy!

Chicken Enchilada Rice Casserole

1½ cups dry Basmati or brown rice	1 (16 ounce) can refried or black beans
1 cup white Cheddar, shredded, divided	3 cups cooked chicken breasts, cubed
1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded, divided	2 (10 ounce) cans Enchilada sauce (or homemade)

1 (14½ ounce) can corn, drained

1 jalapeño, chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cook the rice according the package instructions. Mix the two cheeses together. In a large bowl mix the chicken with the enchilada sauce, refried beans, corn, jalapeño, and half of the cheese. Add rice, season with salt and pepper if needed, and mix well. Pour rice mixture into a large casserole dish. Top with corn then with remainder of cheese. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes or until cheese melts and is bubbly.

ENCHILADA SAUCE:

¼ cup canola oil

1½ cups low-sodium chicken broth

2 tablespoons flour

½ teaspoon ground cumin

2 tablespoons chili powder

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce

½ teaspoon onion powder

1 teaspoon salt

Heat oil in a large skillet to medium heat. Whisk in flour and chili powder. Reduce heat to medium and continue to whisk until lightly browned. Gradually whisk in tomato sauce, salt, chicken broth, cumin, garlic powder, and onion powder. Stir until smooth, and continue simmering over medium heat about 10 minutes, or until slightly thickened. Serve immediately or keep covered in bowl in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.