



## To Freeze Or Not To Freeze

### Foods that Freeze Well

- ❖ Baked, low-moisture items; pastries (baked or unbaked), rolls and breads can be frozen, but add a little extra yeast to breads because some yeast activity is lost when in the cold; unbaked fruit pies with some cookie crumbs or oatmeal added to help absorb moisture from fruit fillings.
- ❖ Baked meat loaf.
- ❖ Casseroles.
- ❖ Cooked chicken or turkey in casseroles.
- ❖ Cooked dried beans (for example, baked beans or bean soup). Freezing softens beans, so cook beans until barely tender for the best results when freezing. If bean dishes are seasoned with ham or bacon, storage time should be limited to two weeks.
- ❖ Cooked pasta, rice and couscous, either with tomato sauce or plain. Store in ziplock bags and remove as much air as possible. Instruct clients to open the bag and add a splash of water to help rehydrate when heating these foods in a microwave.
- ❖ Custards or sauces thickened with root starches (such as tapioca and arrowroot).
- ❖ Dairy products with high-fat content, such as heavy cream or high-fat icings.
- ❖ Hollandaise sauce (due to heated egg yolks used for thickening) can be whisked into shape after thawing.
- ❖ Soups: to avoid curdling, any milk or cream should be whisked in after thawing.
- ❖ Stews, ragouts and goulashes made with beef, lamb, pork or veal. Most vegetables used in these dishes, such as carrots, peas, celery, and small amounts of onion also freeze well. Potatoes may not freeze satisfactorily.

### Foods that Do Not Freeze Well

- ❖ Cake icings made with egg whites become frothy or “weep” when thawed.
- ❖ Cream fillings and soft frostings are unsatisfactory when frozen.
- ❖ Cured meats because salt hastens rancidity; personal chefs should, therefore, avoid freezing such entrees.
- ❖ Custards and cream pie fillings become watery and lumpy.
- ❖ Custards: Separate on thawing and have a poor flavor.
- ❖ Milk products with butterfat content less than 40% separate when thawed.
- ❖ Egg whites (cooked) become cracked, tough and rubbery when frozen; raw egg yolks become gelatinous and thick - adding a small amount of salt or sugar will help prevent this.
- ❖ Eggs: If in their shells will break and crack the shell. If boiled they will become tough. Okay if taken out of the shell and placed in ice-cube trays.
- ❖ Fat may separate from gravy if too much is used in proportion to the starch and flour, so use less fat when making gravy to be frozen. Stir gravy well when heating.
- ❖ Fried foods can lose their crispness and become soggy.
- ❖ Aspic or Jell-O: Becomes gritty and runny. Only freeze satisfactorily when bound or mixed with whipped cream, egg white or puree.
- ❖ Bananas and avocado pears: Turns black and will lose texture. Will freeze okay as a puree if mixed with lemon juice.
- ❖ Boiled potatoes: Become discolored and soggy. Must be mashed first. There are two basic types of potato – Russet (Idaho, baking) and Waxy (Yukon Gold, Red Creamers, Fingerling, etc). Russet potatoes leach water and become gritty if used for mashed potatoes in the freezer. Use waxy types for freezer. Use Russets’ as twice baked potatoes to avoid a gritty end product.
- ❖ Raw celery: Becomes soggy when thawed. But OK if using in soups, etc.
- ❖ Cottage or cream cheeses: Do not freeze unless used in prepared dishes and then frozen.
- ❖ Cream: Any cream containing less than 40 % butterfat, although it is okay if combined with other ingredients.



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- ❖ Salad vegetables: Lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, green onions, etc., become limp and mushy on thawing because of their high water content.
- ❖ Soft meringue: Will become watery on thawing.
- ❖ Sour Cream: Separates when thawed, although it may be frozen if combined with other ingredients.
- ❖ Tomatoes, raw: Collapse on thawing, although they can be fried or grilled; will freeze satisfactorily as a cooked vegetable, puree or juice.
- ❖ Yogurt: Separates when thawed unless it contains a commercial stabilizer.
- ❖ Mayonnaise (not in salads) and other emulsified sauces separate during freezing and thawing. The oil will separate from the egg yolk.
- ❖ Pepper, cloves and synthetic vanilla become strong and sometimes bitter when used in frozen• prepared food.
- ❖ Mature potatoes.
- ❖ Salad greens (fresh), raw tomatoes, raw apples and grapes become mushy and soggy.
- ❖ Salt loses flavor.
- ❖ Sauces that are thickened with cornstarch or flour separate unless beaten or stirred well when heated.
- ❖ Vegetables (raw) lose their crispness.

### Freezing Meats

Freezing preserves the natural fresh qualities of meat better than any other method of preservation. Freezing may tenderize meat slightly, but it will not make tough meat tender. Because of the risk of contamination and the introduction of oxygen that come with grinding, ground meats have a shorter shelf life than other meats.

### Freezing Vegetables

Excellent frozen products may result from most vegetables when:

- ❖ The proper varieties are used.
- ❖ They are top quality.
- ❖ They are adequately scalded and cooled.
- ❖ They are packaged correctly.

Many frozen vegetables are fresher than those purchased on the "fresh market." Some fully cooked vegetables such as baked beans and candied sweet potatoes, when frozen, keep in excellent condition for many months; but most fully cooked vegetables lose flavor rapidly and should be stored for only a few days.

A note about freezing potatoes: It is better to freeze red potatoes than russet because they contain less starch. The best ways to freeze potatoes are mashed, twice baked, au gratin, or in soups or stews (potatoes may become grainy if cooked in stews and soups, or may become mushy and may darken - be sure you have tested your recipe for quality after freezing before using it with a client). If it is necessary to store vegetables for a short time before freezing, spread them in a cool, well ventilated place or in the refrigerator. Prompt cooling in ice water followed by storage in the refrigerator will help retain flavor and other qualities.



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### Notes on Scalding or Blanching

Scalding, or blanching, is a critical step in preparing vegetables for freezing because it cleanses the surface of dirt and organisms and impedes enzyme action, thus helping to retain the color, texture, nutritive value and flavor of the food. It also shrinks the product, making packing easier. It must be done carefully.

Instructions on blanching are as follows:

To blanch in water: Heat water to boiling in a large kettle with a lid. Use a minimum of 1 gallon water for each pound of vegetables. Place the vegetables in a blanching basket (or wire basket) and lower into the boiling water. Cover and start counting the time immediately. Blanching times will vary according to the product. (Heat 1 minute longer at 5,000+ feet above sea level.) Maintain high heat during blanching.

#### To steam-blanch vegetables:

Use a kettle with a tight lid and a rack 3 inches above the kettle bottom. Add an inch or two of water to the kettle and boil. Place vegetables in a single layer in the basket, and lower onto the rack. Cover the kettle and steam for the specified time. (Steam 1 minute longer at 5,000+ feet above sea level.) Maintain high heat during steaming.

**Note:** Timing is very important because under-scalding stimulates the activity of enzymes and is worse than no scalding. Prolonged scalding will cause loss of vitamins, minerals, flavor and color. With water or steam blanching:

When blanching time is completed, remove the vegetables immediately from the water or steam and plunge the basket of vegetables into a large quantity of ice water. Allow as much time for cooling as for blanching. Drain vegetables thoroughly.

#### Blanching in microwave ovens:

This has become increasingly popular. However, because of differences in heating patterns from one microwave oven to another, results of microwave blanching have been uneven. This method also requires working with limited quantities of vegetables at a time, so no time is saved when one is working with large quantities.