



Freezer Meal Basic Training

by Jenny Stanger

Why freezer meals?

- Freezer meals save both time and money because you shop less, eat out less and waste less food. How much money can you save? Depending on the size of your family, you could save up to \$300 per month!
- Freezer Meals are healthier than fast food and pre-packaged frozen foods and with freezer meals, you can cater to your family's tastes and you can determine the portion sizes yourself.
- Freezer meals are convenient to take to friends who are ill, or unable to cook for their family.
- Freezer meals can save you stress and last-minute trips to the grocery store when you need to prepare a meal for company.
- Freezer meals help ensure that your family eats at least one meal together each day, which can help strengthen family relationships.

How long do frozen foods last?

Breads and breakfasts, Drinks and popsicles, ice cream cakes: 2 months

Main dishes, salads, sides and soups: 4 months

Toffee, truffles and freezer jam: 12 months

What doesn't freeze well?

- Celery, lettuce, peaches will get soggy and brown when frozen and defrosted.
- Cream cheese and block cheese will dry out and crumble when defrosted. I freeze my cheese shredded.
- Mayonnaise will separate. Custards (pumpkin pie included) and frostings do not freeze well
- Fully cooked noodles and fried foods will be soggy when defrosted. Only cook 60% then cool. Bake frozen fried foods to finish cooking them.

What freezes well?

- Raw meat freezes well if in a sauce or marinade. Refreezing meats can cause them to lose moisture and become tough, but when mixed with a marinade, meats will cook up with more flavors and are usually more tender.

- Cooked rice, bread dough, pie crusts, cookie dough, cinnamon rolls, muffins, burritos, waffles, shredded cheese, fajita mix, soups, pasta sauces, cooked ground beef, fish, grapes, broccoli...

Packaging:

- I use zip-top plastic bags to store food in the freezer. Any brand works fine, but make sure you double bag for soups, and lay dinners flat so they will freeze and stack like bricks.
- Don't forget to label food, cooking time and temperature with a permanent marker. To prevent freezer burn, squeeze as much air out of the bag as possible before closing it completely.
- Use aluminum foil pans. Lasagnas are made in aluminum foil pans. Pizzas are wrapped in plastic wrap. You can line pizza pans and baking dishes with aluminum foil for easy cleanup.
- When using plastic wrap to line pans, flash freeze food for 1 hour or until frozen, then take out and wrap in more layers of aluminum foil or plastic, label and freeze. To serve, place frozen meal back in glass dish to defrost and cook.

Safe Defrosting:

- Refrigerator: Usually takes 24 hours to defrost
- Microwave: Use right away because food is warm and is cooking in some areas. Bacteria start the multiplication process when food is warm. Always pour off extra water but leave a small amount of water (2-3 T.) when defrosting sauces.

Refreezing: Once food is thawed in the refrigerator, it is safe to refreeze it without cooking. There may be a loss of quality because of the moisture lost through defrosting.

Leftovers: Discard any warm food that has been on the counter longer than 2-3 hours. Use refrigerated leftovers within 4 days. Harmful bacteria will multiply between 40 and 140 °F.

Shelf life: Most freezer foods last 3-6 months.

Kitchen Supplies Needed:

Several Permanent markers, 2 extra large bowls for mixing, 2 sets of measuring cups (set for dry and set for wet ingredients), 1 large stockpot, 2 sharp knives (a chef's knife and a serrated knife) 4 bread pans, several boxes of zip top bags-gallon and sandwich size bags (any brand), a large box of plastic wrap (I buy a 18-inch x 3000- foot box of polyvinyl film (plastic wrap) from a membership warehouse.)

Final Tip

Always wear comfortable shoes while you prepare, freeze or cook food. Cooking barefoot in the kitchen can really take a toll on your body.

Please go to **FreezerDinner.com** if you have any questions and for more fabulous recipes.

Frozen Pizza

Yield: 4 large pizzas

- 12 cups white flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 3 tablespoons instant yeast
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons dough enhancer (optional)
- ½ cup canola or vegetable oil
- 4 cups water (warm)
- 1 tablespoon oregano
- ½ tablespoon garlic powder or garlic salt

In a large Bosch mixer (if you have a Kitchen Aid, divide the recipe in half), combine the flour, salt, yeast, sugar, and dough enhancer. In a glass liquid measuring bowl, warm the water in the microwave for 2 minutes.

Add the water and oil to the flour mixture a few cups at a time. When combined, let the dough mix for 2 minutes. Dough should be elastic and not stick to your fingers. Add more flour if too sticky, more water if too dry. Let the mixer knead the dough for 8 minutes.

Preheat oven to 500°F. Place a pizza stone (best for a crispy crust) in the oven while it is heating up. Or use a greased baking sheet. Shape dough into a large circle, then cut it into four sections with a knife. Lightly oil counter top and roll out each pizza crust with a rolling pin. Fold over the edges and press down to form a crust. With a fork, pierce pizza dough every inch or two to reduce the number of bubbles in the crust. Sprinkle cornmeal or flour on the pizza pans and place pizza dough on pans by folding over half the dough on your forearm and then lifting dough onto pizza pan. Bake each pizza for 4 minutes at 500°F. You can freeze pizza crust (when cooled) or continue with toppings.

Remove hot crust from oven and top with ½ cup cheese first (this will keep the frozen pizza from getting soggy). Prepare pizza sauce (recipe follows) and pour sauce on top of cheese. Pile on toppings; top again with cheese. Cool pizza and then wrap it in plastic wrap without the pan. Label "425°F for 10 to 15-18 minutes" and freeze. You can also freeze extra sauce in zip-top freezer bags.

To serve: Do not defrost frozen pizza. Remove and discard plastic wrap. Place pizza on a pizza stone dusted with cornmeal, or on an aluminum pan in the oven while it is pre-heating to 425°F. When the oven reaches 425°F, bake for 15-18 minutes or until cheese is melted and crust is golden.

Pizza Sauce

(Yield: Sauce for 4 pizzas)

1 large can (29 ounces) tomato sauce

3 tablespoons oregano

3 teaspoons minced garlic

Open the large can of tomato sauce and add oregano and garlic to the can. Divide the sauce between the four pizzas.

Honey Wheat Bread

Yield: 5 loaves or 4 loaves and one pizza

5 cups warm water

1 cup honey

1 cup olive oil (any oil works)

2 tablespoons yeast

¼ cup gluten (optional, it helps the bread stay moist longer)

1 cup hot water

9 cups whole-wheat flour

9 cups white flour

1½ tablespoons salt

1 cup sunflower seeds (optional)

1. I start this recipe by pouring 10 cups of red wheat into my [Nutrimill](#) wheat grinder. Heat 5 cups of water in microwave for 1 to 2 minutes. Pour 5 cups warm water, oil, and honey into a large mixer and mix.
2. Add the yeast, gluten, and 1 cup of hot water, then 9 cups of wheat flour. Add 9 cups white flour, then mix for 5 minutes. Add the salt and the sunflower seeds.
3. If the dough sticks to your fingers, add more flour. Depending on the humidity in the air, you may need more flour.
4. Turn oven on lowest setting (170°F) . Turn your oven off after it reaches that temperature. You just want to warm your oven.

After mixing the dough for 5 minutes, place it on a greased counter and shape it into a big circle. Next, cut the dough into five sections with a knife.

Shape each dough section into a long oval shape and place in greased bread pans.

Let all the bread dough rise in a warm oven for 25 minutes. Then bake the wheat bread at 350°F

degrees for 25 to 30 minutes. Butter the top and then let bread rest for 10 minutes. Remove loaves from pans and cool on a wire rack. Freeze in bread bags or large zip-top bags.

To serve: Defrost bread for 1 minute on high in the microwave, or let the bread defrost on the counter and slice. This bread also makes excellent French toast or a stuffing mix when dried and is delicious when paired with homemade raspberry or apricot freezer jam.

Lasagna

Yield: two 9 by 13 inch pans (8 servings each)

1 box (16 oz) regular lasagna noodles (do not precook)

4 cups grated mozzarella cheese

1 container (24 oz) cottage or ricotta cheese

1 package (8 oz) cream cheese

1/2 cup Parmesan cheese

10 cups spaghetti sauce (you can add browned ground beef or cooked Italian sausage)

In 2 greased 9 by 13 inch aluminum pans, layer ingredients in the following order:

1. 3 noodles (in each pan)
2. cottage or ricotta cheese
3. mozzarella cheese
4. nickel-sized bits of cream cheese, distributed evenly over sauce

Repeat layers. Do not overfill or sauce will spill over in oven while baking and make sure all noodles are covered with sauce.

Wrap pans with layers of plastic wrap, label "350 degrees F, 45 min. or if frozen 350 degrees, 2 hours and freeze.

To serve

Bake frozen at 350 F for 2 hours or thaw overnight in refrigerator and bake at 350 F for 45 minutes. Remove cover for final 10 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes before serving so that excess water can soak back into the noodles.

Grasshopper Ice Cream Cake

Yield: 10 servings

1 (32 oz) bag cream-filled chocolate cookies

1/4 C (1/2 stick) butter, melted

4 cups Mint chocolate-chip ice cream, softened*

4 cups Cookies-and-cream ice cream, softened*

1 1/2 C. hot fudge ice cream topping

1. Reserve 1/3 of cookies (enough to circle the cake.) Crush rest of cookies in a zip top bag or food processor. Reserve 1/4 cup for topping; Combine cookie crumbs and butter and press into the bottom of a 10-in spring form pan, two 9-in. pie plates or a 13 x 9 baking dish. Freeze for 15 minutes.

2. Heat fudge topping on HIGH until pour-able (15-20 seconds). Spread on top of the frozen cookie crust and place remaining cookies around the sides of the pan and freeze for 15 minutes.

3. Spread cookies-and-cream ice cream over fudge topping; freeze for 30 minutes. Spread mint chocolate-chip ice cream over the first layer; sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup cookie crumbs. Cover with plastic and freeze 1 hour or until firm. May be frozen for up to 2 months.

To Serve: Remove from the freezer 10 minutes before serving.

* You can use any ice cream flavors for this recipe. It is also fun to replace the cookies surrounding the cake with candy bars or M&M Cookies.



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