

Healthy Eating: What Foods to Buy Frozen, Not Fresh

Reviewed By: Christine Mikstas, RD, LD
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Berries

Raspberries, strawberries, and blueberries are sweet summer treats. But they can quickly turn moldy even while in the supermarket. Buy them frozen and you can enjoy them for weeks or months, in season or not. Eat them straight out of the freezer. Or thaw before baking them into cobblers, muffins, or pies. Pro tip: add an extra dash of starch or other thickener to soak up the juices.



Spring Peas

These sweet pods have a very short season. That's why almost all shelled peas are sold frozen. That's not necessarily bad. The frozen ones just might have more nutrients. That's because fresh produce start to lose vitamins and minerals within hours or days. The frozen stuff is usually picked, prepared, and packaged when it's at its nutritious peak.



Fish

Freezing methods have come a long way since the days of frozen fish sticks. Fish catchers now often flash freeze their haul right on the boat at 40 degrees below zero. The temperature locks in the fish's peak freshness. It also helps kill parasites and other pathogens that can make you sick. In blind tests, people often prefer frozen seafood to the fresh catches, which may be previously frozen as well.



Corn

You might not be able to get the fresh stuff in the middle of winter. But your freezer section knows no seasons. Just heat up the kernels and add it to your favorite corn dish. As long as it isn't "creamed corn" or some other prepared dish, the nutrition and calories should about equal the fresh stuff.



Broccoli

This member of the cabbage family can turn pale and limp as it sits in your fridge's vegetable drawer all week. The solution? Buy frozen broccoli, which is almost as fresh as the day it was harvested. It will stay that way for weeks.



Ground Beef

You've seen it brown in your fridge in just a couple of days. It's safe to eat, but doesn't look so appetizing. Ground beef spoils sooner than whole cuts of beef because more of its surface is exposed to oxygen. Also, any bacteria on the meat gets mixed in and start to multiply. Buy ground beef frozen or wrap it tightly and freeze it yourself. It should stay safe for a year or longer. But for best flavor, eat it within 3 or 4 months.



Bread

Nothing tops the taste of bread hot out of the oven. But once you bring it home, it can start to get stale after a couple of days and eventually turn moldy. Check out your grocer's frozen-bread shelves. You'll likely find wide choices. Or you can freeze your own bread, even whole loaves. Wrap them airtight and pop them in the toaster or the oven without thawing.



Spinach

There's no substitute for fresh greens in a salad. But frozen spinach has its own particular taste and texture that some people love. Plus it will wait for you in the freezer for weeks at a time. You can sauté it with mushrooms and onions for a quick and easy side dish that's packed with fiber and nutrients.



Mangos

It can be tricky to buy this tropical fruit at the perfect moment of ripeness. Cut it open too soon and it's hard and fibrous. Cut it too late and it's tasteless and mushy. But food companies know to pick and freeze fruits and veggies when they are just right to eat. So take out the guesswork and get a perfect slice of creamy mango deliciousness every time.



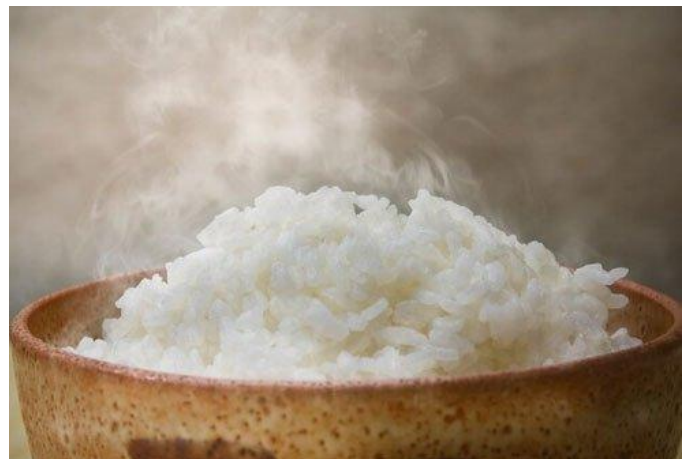
Chicken and Poultry

Your family goes through pounds of chicken practically every day. But you shop for groceries only every couple of weeks. Never want to run out? Buy it frozen. It keeps safely for months instead of mere days. And a whole chicken or turkey should keep safely for up to a year. Just transfer what you need to the fridge the night before to thaw.



Frozen Cooked Rice

Purists might shudder. But frozen cooked rice can mean fluffy grains on your table in seconds. A study in South Korea found that many consumers saw little difference in aroma, texture, or taste between frozen or home-cooked rice. Bonus: individual frozen servings means less waste. So pop them in the microwave for a perfectly steamed bowl.



Freeze Your Own Veggies

Just be sure to blanch them first: dip bite-size vegetables into boiling water for a few seconds and then dunk them in ice water. This stops enzymes from spoiling your veggies, even in the freezer. Blanching also kills germs, brightens color, locks in flavor and texture, and softens vegetables for easier packing. Then pack into plastic with as little air inside as possible.



Sources: This tool does not provide medical advice.

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