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News Release

Can You Freeze These Foods?

I get calls regularly on whether certain items can be frozen or not and for how long?

Can you freeze fresh meats in supermarket wrappings?

Unless you'll use the frozen meat or poultry in a month or two, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends that you add a second wrapping for long-term storage. Overwrap with airtight heavy-duty freezer foil, freezer paper or place the package inside a freezer bag.

While it's safe to freeze fresh meat or poultry in its supermarket wrapping, this type of wrap is permeable to air. Overwrapping the package helps maintain quality and prevent "freezer burn."

Foods with freezer burn are safe to eat though they may be in dry spots. Freezer burn causes grayish-brown leathery spots because air reaches the surface of the food. Cut freezer-burned portions away either before or after cooking. Discard heavily freezer-burned foods for quality reasons.

Can you freeze milk?

While pasteurized milk can be frozen; it may separate or be slightly grainy when thawed. Frozen milk works best for cooking, but you may find it's still okay for drinking.

Freeze milk in plastic freezer containers or special freezer-proof glass jars. Leave some extra space at the top since milk expands during freezing. If packaged in a wide-mouth container, leave 1/2-inch head space for pints and 1-inch for quarts. If packaged in a narrow-mouth container (such as jars), leave 1 1/2-inch head space for either pints or quarts.

Plan to use frozen milk within a month. Thaw milk in the refrigerator. Stir well before using.

Can you freeze cheese?

Hard or semi-hard cheese can be frozen if cut in 1/2 to 1-pound blocks. Wrap in plastic wrap and then put in freezer bags. After freezing, cheese may become crumbly and mealy, but, it will retain its flavor. It works best for cooking. Plan to use frozen cheese within 4 to 6 months. Thaw cheese in the refrigerator and use soon after thawing.

The cheeses that freeze best are brick, Camembert, cheddar, Edam, mozzarella, Muenster, Parmesan, provolone, Romano and Swiss. Blue cheeses are more prone to becoming crumbly but they'll still taste

good. *Cream cheese and cottage cheese do not freeze well however if they mixed into foods such as casseroles they do.*

Can you freeze eggs?

Eggs can be frozen, but not in the shell. It's best to freeze eggs in small quantities so you can thaw only what you need. An easy way to do this is to put them in an ice cube tray. Once frozen, transfer them to a freezer container and label. As with any frozen food, it is best to thaw eggs in the refrigerator and use them as soon as they are thawed. Only use thawed eggs in dishes that will be thoroughly cooked.

Whole Eggs: To freeze whole eggs or yolks crack them into a bowl and gently stir to break up the yolk somewhat. Try not to incorporate air into the eggs. Label the container with the date and the number of eggs. They can be kept frozen for a year, and should be thawed in the refrigerator the day before you intend to use them.

Egg Yolks: To inhibit yolks from getting lumpy during storage you need to add a little salt or sugar according to how you want to use the eggs, then stir gently not adding air. Once again you can freeze in ice cube trays or small containers then repackage and label the container with the date. Use up extra egg yolks in recipes like sauces, custards, yellow cakes, scrambled eggs, and cooked puddings.

Egg Whites: Raw egg whites do not suffer from freezing (cooked egg whites are very rubbery). No salt or sugar is needed. Break and separate the eggs one at a time, making sure that no yolk gets into the whites. Pour into trays and freeze until firm then repackage and label the container with the date. Use up extra egg whites in boiled frostings (i.e., 7-minute frosting), meringue cookies, angel food cake, white cakes, or meringue for pies.

For more information on this topic or other food safety, food preservation or food preparation questions please contact Angela Treadaway your Alabama Cooperative Extension System Regional Extension Agent in Food Safety/Preservation and Preparation at the St. Clair County Extension office at 205-338-9416 or email treadas@aces.edu.