



Food Freezing Basics: Freezing Dairy Products, Eggs and Other Foods





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■ DAIRY PRODUCTS

Butter - Freeze only high-quality butter made from pasteurized cream. Over-wrap store wrap with freezer wrapping. Unsalted butter loses flavor so its storage time is shorter. Flavored butter freezes well.

Cheese - Hard or semi-hard cheeses can be frozen. Frozen cheese will be crumbly and a little dry and will not slice as well, but the flavor will be just as good as fresh cheese. Freeze cheese in small pieces — no more than ½ pound per chunk. Seal it in foil, freezer wrap, plastic film or bag.

Cottage cheese - Cream style and dry cottage cheese and ricotta cheese can be frozen for a month. Cream style may separate when thawed.

Cream cheese - can be frozen for later use in cooking, dips or as icing.



Cheese food products, such as sauces, dips, processed cheese — flavored or plain — usually freeze fine. If in real doubt, freeze a small quantity and check after 24 hours by thawing it. If pleased with the results, freeze the rest. Otherwise, do not freeze.

Cream - Freeze only heavy cream containing 40 percent or more butter fat. Lighter cream and half and half do not freeze well. Cream that has been frozen will not whip to the usual volume. Whipped cream can be sweetened to taste and frozen in individual sized portions. Tray-freeze in mounds.

Ice cream - A plastic wrap laid tightly on the surface of partially used containers of ice cream helps prevent surface changes. Homemade ice cream is difficult to store for any length of time because it becomes grainy. Commercial products have added milk solids and gelatin to prevent this.

Milk - Pasteurized homogenized milk may be frozen, including low and non-fat. Some quality change may be noted upon thawing. Stirring or shaking may help restore smoothness.

Sour cream, yogurt and buttermilk - All of the cultured, soured dairy products lose their smooth texture when frozen. They become grainy and sometimes separate out their water. They can still be used for cooking. Flavored yogurts may be more stable because of the fruit and sugar. It may taste more acidic when thawed.





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■ EGGS

Eggs can be stored for at least one month, covered in the refrigerator. Freezing is often unnecessary.

Whole Eggs - Thoroughly mix yolks and whites. Do not whip in air. To prevent graininess, add 1 tablespoon sugar or ½ teaspoon salt per cup whole eggs, depending on intended use. Strain through a sieve or colander to improve uniformity. Package, allowing ½ inch head space. Seal and freeze.

Another method of freezing whole egg mixture is to use ice trays. Measure 3 tablespoons of egg mixture into each compartment of an ice tray. Freeze until solid. Remove frozen cubes, and package in moisture/vapor resistant containers. Seal and freeze. Three tablespoons of the egg mixture equals one whole egg.

Egg Yolks - Separate eggs. Stir gently. To prevent graininess, add 2 tablespoons sugar or 1 teaspoon salt per cup of egg yolks, depending on intended use. Strain through a sieve. Package, allowing ½ inch head space. Seal and freeze. One tablespoon of the yolk mixture equals one egg yolk.

Egg Whites - Gently mix whites. Strain through a sieve. Package, leaving ½ inch head space. Seal and freeze. Two tablespoons of the egg white mixture equals one egg white.

■ Thawing Dairy Products and Eggs

Butter, eggs, milk, cream and cheese - Place the frozen product in the refrigerator to thaw. After thawing use as fresh. Use soon after thawing. Do not refreeze.

You may need to mix or blend cream and milk slightly.

For more information about food preservation, contact your local office of the NDSU Extension Service or visit our food preservation Web site: www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/food.htm

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■ EXTRA HINTS AND ADDITIONAL FOODS



Baby food (home prepared) - Freeze in meal-size portions in ice cube trays or muffin tins. Place in freezer bags after they are frozen. Thaw in the refrigerator.

Bread crumbs and croutons in freezer bags stay fresh in the freezer.

Brown sugar can be overwrapped and frozen. It will be soft when thawed.

Coffee (ground or beans) - stay fresher in the freezer.

Crackers and chips stay crisp when packaged tightly and frozen.

Dried fruits stay fresh and moist when frozen and they are easier to chop when frozen.

Herbs (fresh) - Wash, drain and pat dry with paper towels. Wrap a few sprigs or leaves in freezer wrap and place in a freezer container. Seal and freeze. These can be used in cooked dishes, but are usually not suitable for garnishes because they become limp as they thaw.

Jams and jellies - Ordinary cooked jams and jellies freeze well. Those made with gelatin may break down during freezing.

Margarine - See butter.

Whipped butter and margarine - Do not freeze well because the emulsion may break, and the product may separate.

Marshmallows are easy to cut when frozen and won't stick to the knife.

Nuts - Shell nuts keeping kernels as nearly whole as possible. Spread in a thin layer to dry for 24 hours. Package in airtight bags for freezing. Nuts keep well frozen up to 6 months. Salted or seasoned nuts keep only about half as long.

Oils - Freezing prevents rancidity. You can strain and freeze oil that has been used for deep-fat frying for reuse. Oil clouds when frozen, but clears when it thaws.

Sauerkraut - Freezing stops fermentation. Frozen sauerkraut may be stored up to 12 months.

Sprouts - A variety of seed sprouts such as alfalfa, mung beans, chick peas, soybeans, etc. may be frozen. First wash the sprouts and removed seed coats. Heat one layer at a time in steam for 3 minutes. Cool promptly in cold water and drain. Package, label and freeze.