**K-State food scientist shares tips for freezing food safely**

Many summer goodies can be frozen for 8-12 months, Blakeslee says

MANHATTAN, Kan. – With a little planning, the garden goodies harvested this summer can be enjoyed well into the winter.

Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee said most fresh garden produce – green beans, corn, tomatoes, berries and more – can be easily frozen to be enjoyed later.

“Freezing food is an easy, inexpensive method to preserve food; it takes minimal investment in equipment and time,” she said.

Blakeslee notes that from a food safety perspective, freezing food is a safe preservation method. Most produce can be frozen for 8-12 months for best quality. “Always label and date packages of food so you know how long they have been in the freezer,” she said.

Blakeslee and her colleagues at Kansas State University have published a guide, titled Safe Food Storage: The Refrigerator and the Freezer, with recommendations on how long common foods can be stored and still maintain safety and quality.

She noted that how food is packaged will affect the quality of frozen goodies.

“There are many types of plastic containers, but not all of them are suitable for freezing food,” she said. “Look for containers that are designated for the freezer. For meat, freezer paper is a good choice because it has a waxy layer on the inside to protect the meat. Reusing cheese or butter containers may be frugal, but those types of plastic containers can crack easily when frozen.”

Another good piece of advice: Don’t cram the freezer with food. “Freeze food in batches so that the freezer does not get overloaded,” Blakeslee said. “If the freezer is overloaded with warm food, it can take longer for food to freeze. Space out the packages so that cold air circulates around them.”
Blakeslee also recommends purchasing a refrigerator/freezer thermometer to monitor temperatures. A refrigerator should be held between 34-40 degrees Fahrenheit and a freezer should be below 0 F. “And regularly clean the appliance to reduce food odors and clean up damaged packages,” Blakeslee said.

Blakeslee is the coordinator of the Rapid Response Center for food science at Kansas State University. In that role, she publishes a monthly newsletter called You Asked It! that provides numerous tips on being safe and healthy.

### Sidebar

What is freezer burn?

Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee said care should be taken to prevent freezer burn when storing food.

Freezer burn is characterized by dry, grayish/brown spots on the food’s surface. While not harmful, it’s not very appetizing; the condition is most notable on frozen meats.

“Freezer burn happens when food is not adequately wrapped to remove oxygen, which has a bleaching effect on the food surface,” Blakeslee said. “It results in poor texture, color, flavor and aroma.”

To prevent freezer burn, package food tightly in packaging designed for freezing. Remove as much air as possible and maintain a temperature of 0 degrees Fahrenheit or lower to freeze food quickly.

“If using freezer containers, crumple a piece of wax paper on top of the food to help minimize headspace,” Blakeslee said. “This helps prevent freezer burn, ice crystal formation, and keeps food pieces from drying out.”

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story


Rapid Response Center for food science, [https://www.rrc.k-state.edu](https://www.rrc.k-state.edu)

You Asked It! monthly newsletter, [https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter](https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter)

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