

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING FROZEN FOODS

Proper storage and thawing procedures for frozen foods are essential for keeping foods safe and palatable. Some foods, such as vegetables, do not need to be thawed before cooking. Many recipes require meat to be only partially thawed or tempered, to facilitate separation before cooking; this prevents excessive moisture loss. Unless otherwise indicated, preparation methods and cooking times are for thawed meat, fish and poultry.

Frozen foods should be stored at or below 0°F. and thawed at 36°F. DO NOT refreeze foods that have been thawed; cook and serve as soon as possible to promote maximum quality and safety.

FROZEN FRUITS: Thaw unopened under refrigeration (36°F. to 38°F.) or covered with cold water.

FROZEN FRUIT JUICES AND CONCENTRATES: These do not require thawing.

FROZEN VEGETABLES: These do not require thawing before cooking. For faster cooking, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, asparagus, cauliflower, and leafy greens may be partially thawed under refrigeration.

FROZEN MEATS: Improper thawing of meat encourages bacterial growth and also results in unnecessary loss of meat juices, poor quality and loss of yield and nutrients. To thaw meat, remove from shipping container, but leave inside wrappings (usually polyethylene bags) on meat. Thaw under refrigeration (36°F. to 38°F.) until almost completely thawed. Spread out large cuts, such as roasts, to allow air to circulate. The length of the thawing period will vary according to the size of the meat cut, the temperature and degree of air circulation in the chill space, and the quantity of meat being thawed in a given space. Boneless meats generally require 26 to 48 hours to thaw at 36°F. to 38°F.

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Meat may be cooked frozen or tempered except for a few cuts which require complete thawing, i.e., bulk ground beef, bulk beef pattie mix, braising Swiss steak, bulk pork sausage and diced beef for stewing. While extra time is required to thaw meat completely before cooking, additional energy and cooking time are required to cook frozen meat.

Roasts, when cooked from the frozen state, will require one-third to one-half more cooking time than thawed roasts. The addition of seasonings, if required, must be delayed until the outside is somewhat thawed and the surface is sufficiently moist to retain the seasonings. The insertion of meat thermometers must also be delayed until roasts are partially thawed. Grill steaks, pork chops and liver should be tempered before cooking to ensure a moist, palatable product. (See Recipe No. A-2 for definition of tempering.) Pork sausage patties and pork and beef sausage links should be cooked frozen.

FROZEN SEAFOOD: Fish fillets and steaks may be cooked frozen or thawed. Any fish that is to be breaded or batter dipped should be thawed. Clams, crabmeat, oysters, scallops and shrimp should be kept wrapped while thawing. Fish and shellfish should be thawed under refrigeration (36°F. to 38°F.) and require 12 hours to thaw.

Frozen, whole lobster, king crab legs, spiny lobster tail, breaded fish portions or nuggets, batter-dipped fish portions, or breaded oysters and shrimp SHOULD NOT be thawed before cooking.

FROZEN POULTRY: Poultry must be thawed under refrigeration (36°F. to 38°F.). Proper thawing of poultry reduces bacterial growth, maintains quality and retains nutrients through less drip loss.

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