

Frozen Foods

One way to cut grocery and food costs is to make your own convenience foods (and it's healthier, too!). When you're too busy, too tired, or too sick to cook, wouldn't it be nice to have a meal in the freezer rather than running out to the greasy spoon for fast food? Honestly, it's not that much work to make that happen.

Whenever you're making a casserole or other food that can freeze, make two (or three or four!) instead. It's cheaper to buy your food in bulk, and you save on time and cleanup in the long run. Even people with small freezers can usually store a couple of frozen casseroles for a rainy day.

(*One way to freeze a casserole: Line your favorite casserole dish with aluminum foil. Put your casserole into the dish just as if you were going to cook it. Freeze casserole, dish and all. Then remove the aluminum foil lined casserole from the pan, wrap in more aluminum foil, and place in freezer. When you're ready to use it, just pop it back into the casserole dish, thaw, and cook!)

In addition, you can save money on convenience breakfast items by freezing your own sausage biscuits, bacon, pancakes, waffles, breakfast burritos...the possibilities are only as limited as your imagination.

Whenever you have leftovers from dinner, even if they're only one serving, freeze them in a Ziploc freezer bag or individual container. Use them for lunches or those times when you only need an individual serving.

Other freezer ideas to cut time and costs:

Buy ground beef on sale in bulk:

Brown, drain, and place into Ziploc bags. Freeze. Use with spaghetti, chili, tacos, hamburger baked bean casserole, sloppy joes, hamburger stew, etc.

Shape some into hamburger patties & freeze, or go ahead and grill/fry and then freeze for quick lunches.

Buy chicken on sale in bulk:

Boil a bunch, cut into chunks, freeze in a single layer on a cookie sheet (so they don't stick together), place into a large Ziploc freezer bag. Use with chicken & dumplings, creamed chicken, quesadillas, white chili, chicken noodle soup, chicken fettuccine alfredo, etc.

Grill a bunch of chicken. Cut a few into strips. Marinade some in fajita marinade, some in Italian dressing, etc. Others, place whole into sauces and marinades and freeze. Thaw and warm in microwave for an instant meal. Grilled chicken can also be frozen without sauces and once thawed, bottled sauces added for a quick entrée.

Raw chicken breasts can be placed in a Ziploc freezer bag with marinade and frozen. When ready to use, thaw and put in oven or on the grill for an easy dinner.

Buy fruits and vegetables in season or on sale. Clean, freeze in a single layer on a cookie sheet, place into large Ziploc bags in freezer.