

Step-by-Step Instructions for Learning How to Cook for the Freezer

Money Saving Mom[®]'s
GUIDE TO

FREEZER

COOKING



by Crystal Paine

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Does the Idea of Freezer Cooking *overwhelm you?*

Fifteen years ago, I was 15 years old and living at home with my five brothers and sisters. (Two years later that turned into six brothers and sisters when my mom had another surprise baby!) We lived out in the country on over 40 acres, and we spent a lot of time working the land — planting and watering trees, weeding our huge garden, and mowing and trimming acres and acres of land.

Needless to say, seven hard-working people can eat a lot — especially when there are hungry teenagers involved! So in addition to putting in long hours outside, we put in quite a few hours in the kitchen to keep everyone fed.

Always looking for a way to make life run a bit more efficiently, my mom decided we'd try this thing called "Once-A-Month Cooking." There was a book out with the same name, so we bought it and planned our first freezer-cooking extravaganza.

It was an enormous amount of work to shop for and make 30 different main dishes. In fact, I remember lying on my back with my feet up in the air at the end of the day feeling like I'd gotten run over by a Mack truck!

But the good news? We didn't have to cook main dishes for an entire month!

We loved the no-cooking-for-a-month thing so much, that we did another massive cooking day the next month — and then again the next month.

And thus, my relationship with freezer cooking began.

In the years since then, my freezer cooking methods have evolved from mega-marathon cooking sessions to mini-micro cooking sessions. But the core principle of cooking in bulk to save me time and effort still holds true.

This ebook was written for those of you who want to try freezer cooking but feel overwhelmed about knowing where to start.

I'm going to share some of the tips and techniques I've learned over the years through my many freezer cooking failures, mishaps, and triumphs.

I hope you'll be encouraged and inspired to make freezer cooking a regular part of your life — or at least to occasionally save yourself some time and effort by doing a little bulk cooking.

I promise that if you implement even a few of the ideas I share, your days will run smoother, you'll have a cleaner kitchen, and you'll have more time to devote to things outside of the kitchen.

Crystal Paine

Three Reasons I *make time* For Freezer Cooking

If you're feeling strapped for time, drained of energy, and overwhelmed by life, you need to try freezer cooking. It may seem like a lot of work and something that will just be one more burden to add to your already-overloaded schedule.

However, I promise you that you'll find putting forth the effort to make meals and parts of meals ahead of time will free up so much time and energy — and keep the kitchen cleaner, to boot.

I'd like to share three reasons freezer cooking benefits my life on a daily basis.



Reason #1. I don't have to panic at 5PM.

I don't know about you, but there are some days at our home when life whizzes by so quickly that it's 5PM before I realize it and the thought of dinner hasn't even entered my mind. If I wasn't regularly cooking ahead and freezing meals, I'd often be tempted to call my husband and ask him to bring something home for dinner.

Freezer cooking solves the 5PM What's-For-Dinner panic. When I forget to set something out earlier in the day to thaw, I grab some frozen taco meat (or other quick-fix meal) and throw together a simple dinner in less than 30 minutes.

Reason #2. I don't have to wash as many dishes.

Freezer cooking enables me to have a much cleaner kitchen on a regular basis.

I've found that by taking even one hour each week to make a few extra meals (or parts of meals) in bulk, preparing dinner is a cinch each night. And instead of dirtying up the same five pans to cook dinner every night, I can triple or quadruple a recipe, preparing food for three or four nights, and only have to wash dishes once!

Yes, we still have to wash plates, bowls, silverware, and cups — oh, the cups which seem to multiply on the counter top when my back is turned! — but we rarely have to deal with mountains of dishes.

Reason #3. I can practice more hospitality.

When I already have pre-made meals in the freezer, I find it's much simpler to invite friends over for lunch or bring a meal to a new mom. And I've found that if I know I already have half of the meal ready in the freezer, I'm much more eager to jump at the opportunity to bless someone else.

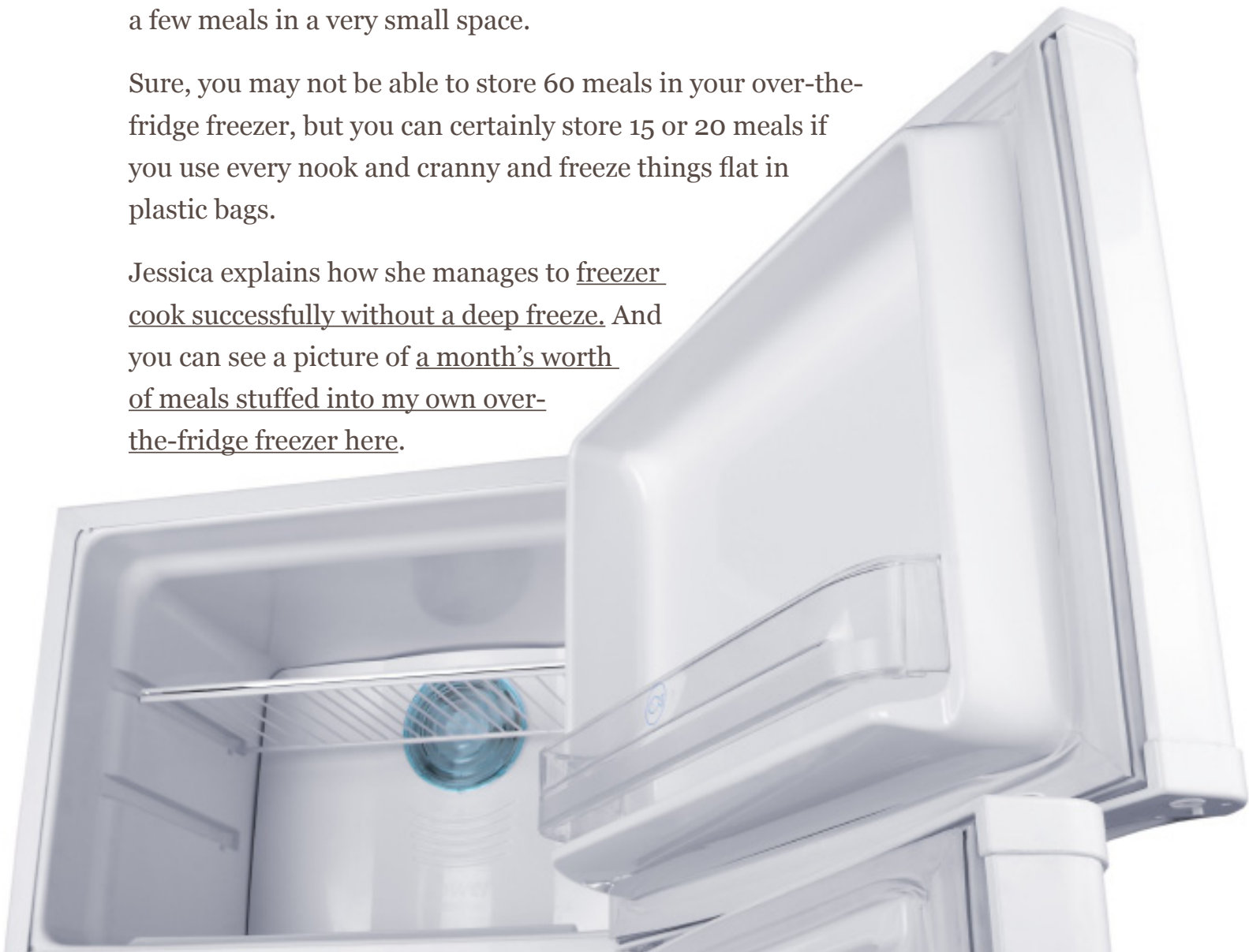
Two Excuses For *not freezer cooking* ... and Why I Don't Buy Them

Excuse #1. "I can't freezer cook because I don't have a big freezer."

A deep freeze is very nice to have, but it's not a necessity for freezer cooking. For years, we only had a freezer over the refrigerator and we managed to make-do just fine. I found that if I froze things flat in freezer bags, I could stack quite a few meals in a very small space.

Sure, you may not be able to store 60 meals in your over-the-fridge freezer, but you can certainly store 15 or 20 meals if you use every nook and cranny and freeze things flat in plastic bags.

Jessica explains how she manages to freezer cook successfully without a deep freeze. And you can see a picture of a month's worth of meals stuffed into my own over-the-fridge freezer here.



Excuse #2. “Our family likes our food fresh. Eating freezer-burned casseroles just sounds gross.”

I’ll readily admit that we’ve had a few icky freezer meals over the years. I think a few even ended up in the trash can! But it wasn’t because they were from the freezer; it was because the recipe wasn’t any good to begin with.

There are thousands of *non*-casserole recipes that freeze well, so if your family avoids casseroles as a rule, there are still plenty of freezer cooking possibilities for you.

For instance, if you eat a lot of grilled chicken, you could make the marinades ahead of time in freezer bags, stick frozen chicken breasts in the bags, and pop them in the freezer. Then you would just pull them out and thaw them in the refrigerator overnight and grill them for dinner. You’ll spend almost no time prepping dinner and your chicken will probably be much more moist and delicious than usual since it marinated overnight.

If you make pancakes on a regular basis, you could mix up all of the dry ingredients in bags and stick them in the freezer. Then when you’ve got a craving for pancakes one morning, just dump a bag into a bowl, add the wet ingredients, and you’ve got fresh pancakes in practically no time at all.

Start thinking about the recipes your family already loves and makes on a regular basis. Consider how parts of them could be adapted to be made ahead of time and stuck in the freezer.

And keep reading, because I’m pretty sure that no matter how picky your family is, you’ll find at least a few ideas and recipes in the following pages that your family will love.



There is No *one-size-fits-all* Method to Freezer Cooking

There are many, many ways to freezer cook, and none of them are right or wrong. I encourage you to experiment with a few different methods to determine which one works best for your family.

But remember not to get too stuck on any one method. As seasons and responsibilities change in your life, you'll probably find that your freezer cooking methods need to adapt. Do what works best for you in your current season and don't feel guilty if it's not what's working well for someone else — even if they tell you their method is superior.

The 30 Meals in a Day Method



As I mentioned in the introduction, when I first started freezer cooking, I thought that the only way to do it was to have a big “Once-A-Month Cooking” day where I made up 30 different meals and stuck them in the freezer. While this is certainly one way to freezer cook, it is far from the only way.

In fact, after trying many different methods, I’m convinced that cooking 30 different meals in one day is actually one of the hardest and least-effective ways to accomplish freezer cooking. If you’re going to try a full day of freezer cooking, at least triple or quadruple a few of your favorite recipes instead of making 30 different recipes. This will save you time and effort. Plus most families I know are completely okay with eating their favorite recipes once every week or two.

The Half-Day Method



If the thought of spending a whole day in the kitchen is daunting, or it's something you simply don't have room for in your schedule, the Half-Day Method might work well for you. It basically means that you only spend half a day (usually four to six hours) dedicated to making meals ahead for the freezer.

Four to six hours is long enough to get some serious work done, but not too long that you end up completely exhausted. Personally, I've found that sometimes having less time to work can actually end up working in my favor. When I'm working against the clock, I seem to get more done.

It truly is amazing what you can accomplish in an uninterrupted four to six hours. For proof, check out this post from *A Turtle's Life* where she shows you [how she made 46 meals in 4 hours](#).

The One-Hour Method



I recently found that a full or even a half day of cooking was just not working well for me. But I didn't want to give up the benefits of freezer cooking.

So I devised a plan to schedule in once-a-week, one-hour power-cooking sessions. Sure, I can't get 55 freezer meals made in an hour, but I've been amazed at how much I can accomplish when I work quickly and stay focused!

You can see some of my recent [Freezer Cooking in an Hour sessions here](#).

The 15-Minute Method



In the past month I've also been experimenting with having 15-minute freezer cooking sessions four afternoons a week. I can easily whip up a single or double batch of a simple recipe in this time frame.

15-minute freezer cooking sessions aren't ideal if you want to make complicated or more time-consuming recipes, and they also don't cut back on the dishes as much as long sessions do, but devoting 15 minutes a few times a week to cook ahead can still be a huge help during busy seasons.

For more suggestions and ideas, read this article: ["How to Make Freezer Cooking Work When You Have a Busy Schedule."](#)

Is it better to make complete meals or parts of meals?

Many people equate freezer cooking with casseroles. But there is a world of freezer cooking potential beyond casseroles and one-dish dinners. I encourage you to aim for some variety when freezer cooking.

When doing a freezer cooking session, I will typically make some complete meals and some parts of meals. This gives me more options to choose from for our weekly menus, and it provides more variety so that we aren't just having casseroles for dinner every night.

For instance, if I make taco meat, we can use it in tacos, we can roll it up with cheese in tortillas for burritos, or I can use it to make [Build-Your-Own Haystacks](#).

Three Steps to Successful *freezer cooking*

Step #1. Find a Method That Works for You.

Look over the list of methods I shared earlier and pick one to start with. If you're a brand-new cook, I'd suggest beginning with the 15-Minute Method. If you're a seasoned chef, you might be ambitious enough to try a huge freezer cooking extravaganza using the Half-Day or 30 Meal Method.

Be realistic. Think about the time and energy you have to invest, choose your plan of action, and then jump in with both feet.

The worst thing that can happen is that you have to go back to the drawing board. And that's totally okay — I do it all the time!

Step #2. Start With Recipes Your Family Loves.

Once you've decided upon your chosen freezer cooking method, it's time to devise your Cooking Day Plan. I know how easy it is to want to try a bunch of new recipes when you first start freezer cooking; but if you're new to it, I suggest that you stick with recipes you know well at first. This way you won't be trying too many new things at once!

Step #3. Don't Be Intimidated.

I have a long history of flopped dinners. In fact, when I was growing up, many of my family members were afraid to eat anything I made, for fear of what it might taste like or what it might be made of.

However, years of practice has much improved my cooking abilities and it's been a long time since anyone has refused to eat my cooking. In fact, more and more often, people are asking for my recipes — which I take as a good sign.

I tell you this to encourage you, because I'm not some culinary genius! I've learned a lot through trial and error, failures, and flops. And I've learned that the best way to get anywhere in life is not to be afraid to try — even if something fails.

So even if you've never cracked an egg or made anything besides toast and cereal, don't be intimidated. Take it slowly, expect that you'll make some mistakes, and just keep learning and experimenting. Soon enough you'll land on some recipes that work well for you.

Freezer Cooking Day

Step-By-Step

Planning is key in pulling off a successful Freezer Cooking Day, regardless of the method you're using, whether it's 30 Meals, Half-Day, 1-Hour, or even the 15-Minute Method. Believe me, I've tried winging it before and it just doesn't work.

Here are the steps I use to prepare for Freezer Cooking Day. While you may not adopt my exact methods for your own planning, hopefully these might give you a good place to start.

Step #1. Find Recipes by Shopping Your Cupboards.



The first step in planning for Freezer Cooking Day is to create a **Master List of Recipes**, so I start my planning by opening up my cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer to see what ingredients I already have on hand. I'm always amazed at how much inspiration I find just from the ingredients already in my cupboards.

Jot down a list of ingredients you have to work with and possible recipe ideas as you go along. If you have an odd assortment of ingredients and are stumped for ideas, check out the [Ingredient Search feature on AllRecipes.com](#).

To give you an example, I went through my cupboards and freezer and found canned tomatoes, whole-wheat pasta, and cream cheese. I immediately remembered [Jessica's lasagna](#) used those ingredients, so I added that recipe to my list.

Step #2. Consult the Sales Fliers for Deals.

If your cupboards don't produce enough ideas for recipes, the next step is to consult the sales fliers. I often combine both the ideas from my cupboards and what is on sale to make up my **Master List of Recipes**.

Step #3. Make a Master List of Recipes and a Grocery Shopping List.

Take the recipe ideas you jotted down and narrow them down to 4-10 different final choices (or more or less depending on the Freezer Cooking Method you've chosen). Shoot for some variety in the main dishes you choose; I doubt you want to eat three weeks of nothing but chicken casserole! Also keep in mind how much time preparing each recipe will take. I usually try to pick a few simple meals and a few more time-intensive dishes.

Once you have your **Master List of Recipes**, create a **Grocery Shopping List** by reading through each recipe and noting what ingredients you lack. Since you'll likely need duplicates of many items, you can just write "onions" on your list and then make a tally mark next to it as you go through the recipes for each onion you'll actually need.

Your **Grocery Shopping List** may end up looking something like this:

Onions *////* ...meaning you need to buy 4 onions

Cheddar Cheese *HTT //* ...meaning you need enough for 7 cups of shredded cheese

Ground Beef *///* ...meaning you need 3 pounds of ground beef

Garlic */* ...meaning you need 1 head of garlic

If your list starts to get really messy and you're afraid you might not be able to decipher it when you're shopping, re-write it on a clean sheet of paper once you're finished with the rough draft.

When you're done making your list, match up any coupons to the items on your list and put these in an envelope along with your final **Grocery Shopping List**.

Step #4. Make a Master Prep List.

Take your Master List of Recipes and next to each recipe, write down what things you could prepare in bulk, such as shredding cheese, chopping onions, browning ground beef, or cooking and chopping chicken.

For instance, if I were doubling the lasagna recipe, I would write it like this:

*Lasagna x 2 - (recipe on LifeAsMom.com)
Brown 2 pounds of ground beef
Grate 24 ounces of mozzarella cheese*

I might have three other recipes which also take browned ground beef and four which take mozzarella cheese. So once I've written the prep work next to each recipe, I can make a Master Prep List which combines all the prep work for all the recipes into one list.

My **Master Prep List** for this Freezer Cooking Day might look like this:

- cook 4 cups beans*
- cook & chop 6-8 cups chicken*
- cook 1 cup rice*
- shred blocks of cheddar cheese*
- chop 3 onions*
- chop 5 cloves of garlic*
- make pizza dough*
- thaw ground beef for meatloaf*
- brown 4 lbs. ground beef*
- boil noodles for lasagna*

Step #5. Make a Master Plan for Freezer Cooking Day.

I recommend also making a final Master Plan which includes the order of events for your Freezer Cooking Day. First, you'll do all the items on your Master Prep List and then you'll actually put together all the meals. You'll save a lot of time and effort by doing all the prep work first. And when you get to the actual putting together of recipes, you'll just fly through them.

My **Master Plan** might look like this:

- *Do all prep work*
- *Mix up pancake batter/butterhorns*
- *Make broccoli & double cheese calzones*
- *Make lasagnas*
- *Make chicken & red bean burritos & brown bag burritos*
- *Make white bean & chicken chili*
- *Make cheesburger meatloaf*
- *Make taco meat*
- *Make lemon chicken*

I always try to put the most time-intensive recipes first and the easiest recipes at the end. That way, if I'm starting to drag halfway through the cooking, I know that I've saved the easiest for last and it gives me renewed energy.

So that's my simple explanation of how I plan a Freezer Cooking Day. Hopefully it will give you some inspiration and direction to get started with freezer cooking.

I've also included printable planners at the end of this ebook that you can use to help prepare for your own Freezer Cooking Day. You can print off your own Recipe Worksheet, Grocery Shopping List, Master List of Recipes, Master Prep List, and Master Plan.

simple things **You Can Prep Ahead and Stick in the Freezer**

Bananas

Peel, chop, and freeze bananas that are too ripe. These are great to use in smoothies. You can also peel them and freeze them whole to use in banana bread or muffins.

Shredded Carrots

If you make carrot muffins on a regular basis, it's much more efficient to shred a big batch of shredded carrots all at once. Just divide the shredded carrots into one-cup baggies and store in a freezer bag to use as needed.

Chicken

Cooking up chicken and then chopping and freezing it can save you a lot of time in meal preparation later. I like to bake my chicken breasts, as they seem to be a lot more moist that way.

You can use the chopped chicken in homemade pizza and chicken casseroles. Or you can sprinkle it on salads, throw it into soups, or just eat it plain — as my children love to do!

Ground Beef

Having pre-browned ground beef in the freezer to add to soups, on pizza, or in casseroles is a big time-saver. Or you can do what I often do and add onions, beans, and taco seasoning to the meat to make taco meat. In addition to the normal uses for taco meat, you can also add it to soups or chili.

Baking Mixes

Do you make pancakes, waffles, or muffins on a regular basis? Save yourself some of the prep time by mixing up a quadruple batch of the dry ingredients and then portioning them into freezer bags.

Cookie Dough

Most cookie doughs can be made ahead and then frozen for later use. You can freeze the dough rolled into balls or in logs, or you can freeze the dough in a tub and scoop it out to use.

My only warning is that you might want to hide the frozen cookie dough at the bottom of the freezer — especially if you actually want to be able to make any chocolate chip cookies with it!

Foods that Freeze Well

meats (beef, chicken, etc.)	<i>Freeze meats uncooked, cooked, grilled, chopped, shredded, etc.</i>
meatballs, meatloaf	
browned ground beef, taco meat	
casseroles	
beans	<i>It's much more cost effective to make a big pot of beans and divvy it into small bags and freeze versus buying canned beans.</i>
bean soups, chili	
chopped and blanched vegetables	
fruit	<i>Washed and cored berries, peeled bananas (either chopped or left whole), washed grapes (we use them in this yummy Pick-Me-Up Smoothie) and even oranges (we use frozen oranges in this delicious Orange Cream Smoothie)</i>
pie-ready apples	<i>Peel, core, slice and sprinkle with a little lemon juice and cinnamon/sugar to have them at-the-ready for apple pie or Slab Apple Pie.</i>
pureed pumpkin, carrots, squash	<i>You can cook and puree vegetables and <u>freeze in ice cube trays</u> to use as baby food.</i>
baking mixes	<i>We love this homemade Bisquick alternative.</i>
pancakes, muffins, waffles	
cookies, brownies, cookie dough	
pie crusts	
shredded cheese	
butter	
cream cheese	<i>Cream cheese changes consistency a little, so I suggest only freezing it to use in cheesecake or baking.</i>
yogurt	
milk	<i>I freeze milk all the time. However, it does change consistency, so I suggest only freezing milk to use in pancakes and waffles.</i>

Foods That Don't Freeze Well

eggs, either cooked or raw
custards and cream puddings
fresh vegetables
mayonnaise
gravy or white sauce
fried foods
gelatin
cooked potatoes (*Potatoes will get mushy and watery. However, many people have success freezing twice-baked potatoes and mashed potatoes.*)

How to Freeze Food *the right way*

Preventing Freezer Burn

One of the biggest questions I'm asked about freezer cooking is, "how do you prevent freezer burn?" Well, it does take some trial and error and you may have a few mishaps, but these rules of thumb should help you:

1. Seal Your Containers Very Tightly.

Freezer burn is the result of oxygen getting into your frozen food. The less oxygen you allow into the package, the less chance of freezer burn.

Therefore, if you're using a foil or glass pan that does not have an airtight lid, be sure to seal it tightly with foil and press down all of the edges so that no air can get through. I personally don't recommend using foil or glass pans without airtight lids if you're planning to leave something in the freezer for longer than a few weeks.

Instead, I recommend using freezer bags. Not only are they much easier to make completely airtight, you also don't have to worry about having a large stash of extra pans on hand. Freezer bags also allow you to freeze things flat so you can stack them or put them in a tub like file folders. Freezer bags allow you to fit a lot more frozen food into a much smaller space.

Another option that works well is to line a pan with foil and freeze the casserole in it and then remove it and wrap it in another layer of foil when it is frozen. You can [see pictures and more details on this method here.](#)

2. Remove All Air From Freezer Bags.

When freezing food in freezer bags, be sure to remove all the air from the bag when you seal it. I usually just squeeze all the air out as I'm sealing the bag, but if you want to be really thorough, you can use a straw to suck the extra air out.

Jessica recorded a video to demonstrate [how to use a straw to remove all the excess air from a freezer bag.](#)

3. When in Doubt, Double-Wrap.

If you're just not completely sure that something is airtight, go ahead and set your mind at ease by double-wrapping things. You can use plastic wrap for the first layer and then cover with a layer of foil for extra protection against freezer burn. This is especially good to do if you are freezing loaves of bread whole.

Flash Freezing

Most of the time, if you place foods like fruit or pancakes directly into a freezer bag and then pop the whole bag into the freezer, the individual pieces will all stick together in one big clump. This makes it very difficult to pull out only a few pancakes to use at a time.

So to prevent the pieces from sticking together, you can flash freeze the food instead. Flash freezing is simply a quick freeze to harden something enough before placing it in a freezer bag.

To flash freeze, just lay out the food items separated on a cookie sheet and stick them in the freezer for an hour (or until hardened). Then remove them from the cookie sheet, place them in a freezer bag, and put them in the freezer. The flash freezing should prevent the pieces from clumping together and you'll find it's much easier to remove individual pieces when you need them.

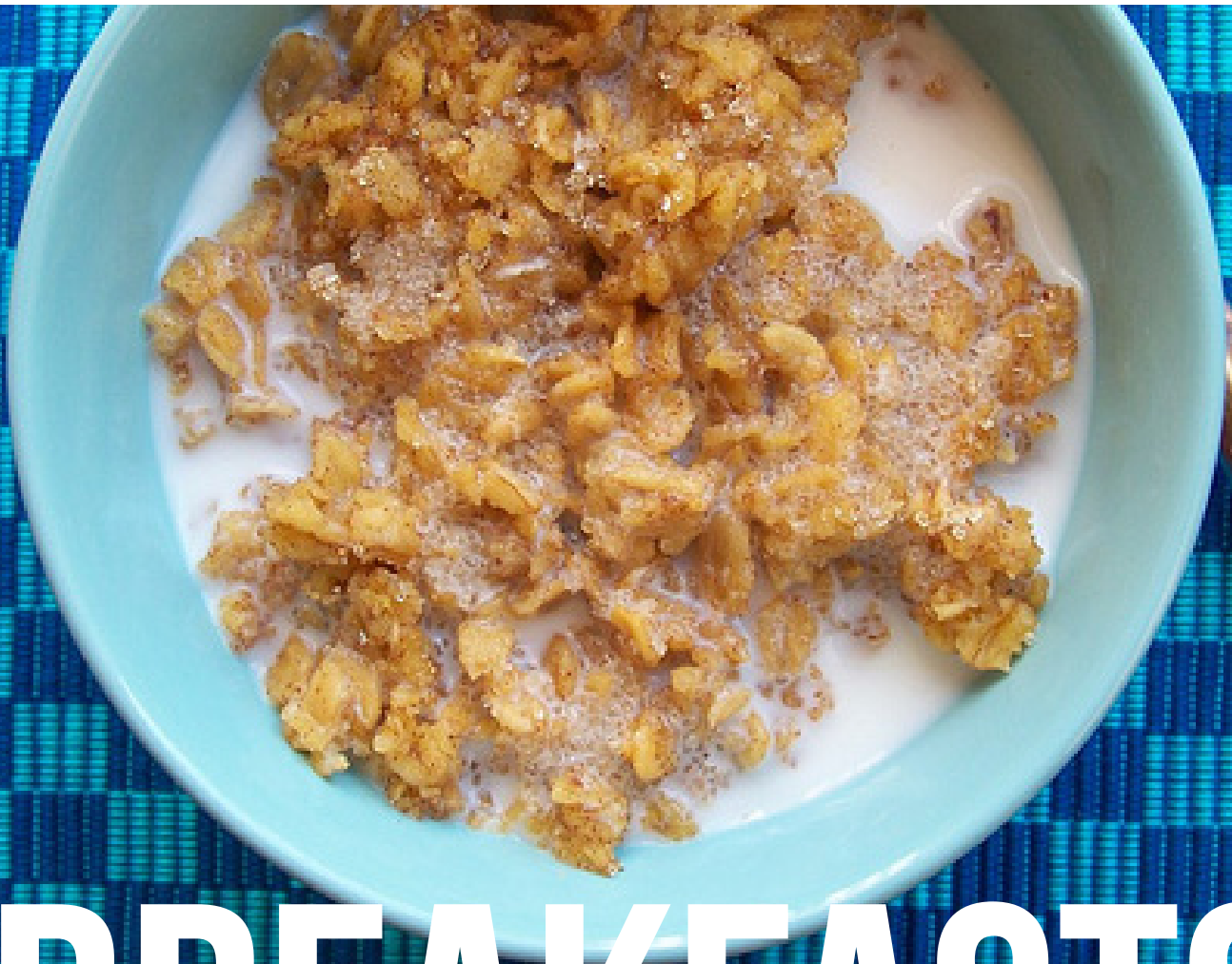
Don't Forget to Label!

Before you put your yummy food in the freezer, don't forget to label it! The last thing you need is a freezer full of unlabeled food.

The simplest way to label your food is to use a sharpie to write the following information on each container or freezer bag:

- ❶ The name of the item.
- ❷ The date you're freezing it.
- ❸ Any reheating instructions.

If you're planning to re-use the bag or foil, you can write this information on masking tape and then tape it to the outside of the container or bag.



BREAKFASTS

Baked Oatmeal



1/3 cup butter, melted
2 large eggs
3/4 cup raw sugar
(or brown sugar)
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1 1/2 tsp vanilla
1 tsp cinnamon
1/4 tsp salt
1 cup + 2 T milk
3 cups oats (regular or
quick oats)

serves 6-8

Beat eggs, sugar and butter together. Mix in baking powder, vanilla, cinnamon and salt. Stir in milk and oats.

To freeze:

Pour into a greased 9×13 foil pan or baking dish and cover well. (Can also pour into a zip-top freezer bag). Freeze.

To bake:

Thaw overnight in the refrigerator. In the morning, bake at 350 degrees for 35-45 minutes until set in the middle. Serve warm with milk. (We like to sprinkle sugar on top before pouring the milk on.)

If you want to serve it without freezing it first, let it sit in the refrigerator overnight and then bake it at 350 degrees for 35-45 minutes in the morning.

Recipe adapted from Food.com

Breakfast Burritos



<i>1/4 cup</i>	<i>butter</i>
<i>1/3 cup</i>	<i>chopped onion</i>
<i>1/3 cup</i>	<i>chopped green pepper</i>
<i>18</i>	<i>eggs</i>
<i>1/2 cup</i>	<i>milk</i>
<i>1 cup</i>	<i>chopped ham</i>
<i>1 tsp</i>	<i>salt</i>
<i>1/2 tsp</i>	<i>pepper</i>
<i>2 cups</i>	<i>shredded cheddar cheese</i>
<i>20</i>	<i>flour tortillas</i>

Saute onions and green pepper in butter. Beat eggs and milk together and pour into the skillet with the onions and peppers.

Add the ham, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until eggs are set. Mix in cheese and let melt.

Scoop 1/2 cup egg mixture onto tortillas. Fold ends under and roll up. Freeze (see instructions below) or put all burritos in a baking dish, top with extra cheese (if you'd like) and bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes or until heated through. Serve with salsa.

To freeze:

Wrap burrito in a paper towel and then in a sheet of foil. Seal tightly and place in freezer bags. When bag is full, remove all air and seal. Freeze.

To bake:

Remove foil and put paper-towel-wrapped burrito in microwave. Reheat for around one minute. Serve with salsa.

Recipe adapted from Amy's Finer Things



BREADS

Make-Ahead Butterhorns



- 2 T, heaping dry yeast*
- 1/3 cup warm water (110-115 degrees)*
- 9 cups flour, divided (you can use any mixture of white or whole-wheat flour)*
- 2 cups warm milk (110-115 degrees)*
- 1 cup butter, melted*
- 1 cup sugar (we substituted sucanat)*
- 6 eggs*
- 2 tsp salt*
- 3-4 T butter, melted*

makes 32 rolls

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in water. Add 4 cups flour, milk, butter, sugar, eggs and salt. Beat 2 minutes or until smooth.

Add enough remaining flour to form a soft dough. Turn onto floured board and knead lightly. (Or, knead in mixer until sides of bowl are clean, then knead two more minutes.)

Place in a greased bowl, turning dough once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled (1-3 hours).

Punch dough down and divide into four equal parts. Roll each part into a 12-inch circle and brush with melted butter.

Cut each circle into 8 pie-shaped wedges.

Roll up each wedge for wide edge to tip of dough and pinch to seal.

To freeze:

Place rolls, top down, on baking sheets and freeze. When frozen, place in freezer bags and keep frozen until needed.

To bake:

Take out as many frozen rolls as you'll need and place them on a greased baking sheet. Thaw for five hours or until doubled in size. Bake at 375 degrees until lightly browned (about 8-10 minutes). Brush with melted butter as soon as they come out of the oven. Remove and serve immediately or cool on wire racks.

Our Favorite Banana Bread



2 cups flour (all-purpose, whole-wheat, or a mixture of both)
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 cup sugar
2 eggs, beaten
3-4 bananas, mashed
1/2 tsp vanilla
3 T milk

makes 1 loaf

Stir together dry ingredients. Beat together remaining ingredients. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and blend until just combined. Pour into greased loaf pan and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until toothpick inserted into the bread comes out clean. Cool in pan for 10 minutes and then transfer to a wire rack.

To freeze:

Cool loaf completely, cut, and stick in a freezer bag.

To serve:

Pull desired amount of slices out and thaw on the counter top for 20 minutes. Or, you can stick them frozen into a lunch or snack sack and they'll be ready to eat by lunchtime!

Tip: We love to add a cup of chocolate chips to the batter! Yum!

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins



4 eggs
2 cups sugar
16-oz. can pureed pumpkin
1 1/2 cups oil
3 cups flour
2 tsp baking soda
2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp salt
1 pkg chocolate chips

makes 24-30 muffins.

In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs, sugar, pumpkin, and oil until smooth. Add in dry ingredients and mix well. Fold in chocolate chips. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups 3/4 full.

Bake 16-20 minutes at 400 degrees.

To freeze:

Stick cooled muffins into a freezer bag and freeze.

To serve:

Remove desired amount of muffins from freezer bag and thaw on the counter top for 20 minutes--if you can wait that long! Or, you can stick them frozen into a lunch or snack sack and they'll be ready to eat by lunchtime!

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins are a standby at our house. I'm not sure that they are necessarily the most frugal muffins ever, and I certainly know they aren't the healthiest muffins ever, but they are sure delicious. And if you can get the pumpkin for \$0.25/can and the other staple ingredients on sale or at Aldi, it can be rather economical.

These muffins freeze really well and can pretty much be eaten straight out of the freezer. We love to use them for quick snacks or for a special breakfast treat, and they are one of my husband's favorite things for me to pack in his lunch.



MAIN DISHES

Make-Ahead Marinated Chicken Recipe



One bottle of your favorite Italian salad dressing

6 frozen boneless, skinless chicken breasts

serves 4-6

To freeze:

Put the chicken in a freezer bag. Pour the Italian dressing over the chicken. Squeeze the air out of the bag and seal it up. Freeze.

To bake:

Quick Method: Pull frozen chicken out of the freezer and run the freezer bag under hot water to thaw slightly. Pour all the contents of the bag into a 9×13-inch baking dish. Cook at 350 degrees for 45 to 60 minutes.

Longer Marinating Method: Pull frozen chicken out of the freezer, stick the bag in a bowl and let it thaw in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours. Pour all the contents of the bag into a 9×13-inch baking dish. Cook at 350 degrees for 45 to 60 minutes.

Crock Pot Method: Pull frozen chicken out of the freezer and run the freezer bag under hot water to thaw slightly. Pour all the contents of the bag into the crock pot and cook on high for 4-6 hours, until thoroughly cooked through.

This is delicious served over rice with steamed vegetables on the side.

Southwest Roll-ups



2 cans refried beans
1/2 cup salsa
2-4 cups cooked chicken, chopped
2 cups shredded Cheddar
cheese
16 tortillas

makes 16 roll-ups

Mix together beans, salsa, and chicken. Spread 1/16th of mixture onto one tortilla. Sprinkle with cheese. Roll up and turn ends under.

To freeze:

Stick roll-ups in a freezer bag and freeze.

To cook:

When ready to bake, thaw roll-ups, and bake in a 9x13-inch pan at 350 degrees for 20-30 minutes until heated through. Sprinkle with more shredded Cheddar cheese, if desired. Serve with salsa.

Lasagna Casserole



1 pound ground beef or sausage
1 onion chopped (opt.)
8 oz. uncooked noodles
(we like spiral or rotini noodles best)
1/3 – 1/2 jar spaghetti sauce
1 15-oz. can diced tomatoes
2 eggs, beaten
2 cups cottage cheese or ricotta cheese (we prefer cottage cheese and it's typically much cheaper, especially if you can find it marked down!)
8 oz. mozzarella cheese, grated
1/2 tsp parsley (chopped fresh or dried)
salt/pepper

serves 6

Brown ground beef and onion until cooked. While the meat is cooking, boil the noodles according to package directions. Mix spaghetti sauce with diced tomatoes and browned ground beef. Set 1/2 cup of mozzarella cheese aside to sprinkle on the top. Combine the rest of the mozzarella cheese, cottage cheese, beaten eggs, parsley and salt and pepper.

Layer a third of the meat sauce, then the noodles and then the cheese mixture in a 9 x 13-inch pan. Repeat two more times. Sprinkle with cheese.

To freeze:

Cover pan generously with foil, seal tightly, and freeze.

To serve:

Thaw overnight in the refrigerator. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 45 minutes (until bubbly). Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.



DESSERTS

Whole-Wheat Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies



- 1 cup shortening or butter (softened)
- 1/3 cup peanut butter
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 cups oats (regular or quick oats)
- 1 12-oz. pkg chocolate chips

makes approximately 40 cookies.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cream together first six ingredients. Add flour, baking soda, salt and oats. Mix well. Stir in chocolate chips. Roll into 1-1 1/2-inch balls. Place on greased cookie sheets and bake for 10 minutes or until done.

To freeze:

Roll dough into balls and place on a cookie sheet. Freeze for 1-2 hours. Put frozen cookie dough balls into a plastic freezer bag and seal tightly.

To bake:

When ready to bake, pull out the desired amount of balls and place on a greased cookie sheet for 30-45 minutes to thaw. Bake at 375 degrees for 10 minutes or until done.

This is a recipe my older sister created many years ago and it's been a family staple ever since. It's not a low-fat recipe (I think I gained a pound just making these yesterday!), but it's delicious.

It's a hearty cookie and it blends two of my favorite foods together — chocolate and peanut butter. And the whole-wheat flour and oats might help balance out the sugar and fat... or at least I like to tell myself that!

This cookie dough freezes well and is perfect to have on hand for last-minute guests or a mid-afternoon snack.

Bread Machine Cinnamon Rolls



Dough:

1 cup+ 2 T warm milk
3 T canola oil
1 egg, lightly beaten
2 egg whites
1/2 cup sugar
4 cups flour
1 tsp salt
3 tsp bread machine yeast

Filling:

2 T butter, melted
2/3 cup brown sugar
1 T cinnamon

Icing:

1 tsp milk
1 1/2 cups confectioners sugar
4 T or less butter, softened
1 tsp vanilla

makes 10-15 rolls

Put the dough ingredients in the bread machine in the order listed and run on the dough cycle. (Add a bit more flour if the dough seems too wet after first few minutes of kneading in the bread machine.)

After the dough cycle is finished, roll the dough into a large rectangle and spread it with the filling (2 Tablespoons melted butter plus the brown sugar and cinnamon mixture. We often like to double the filling.) Roll up and cut into 10-15 rolls.

To freeze:

Place on a cookie sheet and stick in the freezer. Once frozen you can stick them in a freezer bag as shown here. (<http://bit.ly/oOY79N>)

To bake:

Place frozen rolls on a greased cookie sheet and set out overnight on the counter (or for 6-8 hours). Bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes or until browned. Spread with icing on as soon as they come out of the oven.

After many flopped attempts, I was so excited to finally find a delicious recipe for Bread Machine Cinnamon Rolls. Not only were they simple to do — they probably took me a total of 20 minutes of effort to pull off the first time I made them — but they were a huge hit at our house.

Chocolate Banana Bread



Mix together the flour, cocoa powder, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

Stir the mashed bananas, eggs, melted butter, and vanilla. Carefully fold the banana mixture into the dry ingredients until just combined. Mix in the chocolate chips.

Pour into a greased loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 55 to 65 minutes until the bread has risen and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool and wrap in plastic wrap and foil or in a zip-top bag.

Store in the refrigerator or freezer.

Adapted from Joy of Baking

- 1 3/4 cups flour*
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder*
- 1 cup sugar*
- 1 tsp baking powder*
- 1/4 tsp baking soda*
- 1/4 tsp salt*
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten*
- 1 stick butter, melted and cooled*
- 3 ripe bananas, mashed well*
- 1 tsp vanilla extract*
- 1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips*

additional resources **For Freezer Cooking**

More Favorite Freezer Cooking Recipes

[Honey Pizza Dough](#)

[Homemade Pizza Pockets](#)

[Morning Glory Muffins](#)

[No Bake Energy Bites](#)

[Homemade Egg McMuffins](#)

[Frozen Banana Bites](#)

A Few More Inspiring Articles

[“46 Freezer Meals in 4 Hours”](#)

[“10 Things I Learned From My First Attempt at Freezer Cooking”](#)

[“Maximizing Your Freezer’s Potential and Minimizing Freezer Burn”](#)

[“Freezer Cooking with the Slow Cooker”](#)

A Few Helpful Websites

[Once a Month Mom](#)

[What’s Cookin’, Chicago: Freezer-Friendly, Make-Ahead Meals](#)

[LifeAsMom](#)

[Annie’s Eats: Stocking the Freezer, Make-Ahead Meals](#)

Recommended Freezer Cooking Cookbooks

[*Don’t Panic - Dinner’s in the Freezer: Great-Tasting Meals You Can Make Ahead*](#)

[*Don’t Panic--More Dinner’s in the Freezer: A Second Helping of Tasty Meals You Can Make Ahead*](#)

[*30 Day Gourmet’s BIG Book of Freezer Cooking*](#)

[*Taste of Home: Freezer Pleasers*](#)

Printable Planners *for freezer cooking days*

The following five printable planners can either be printed directly to your printer so you can write out your information by hand, or you can enter information into the forms on your computer.

To enter text with your computer, simply tab through the fields in the forms and type your information directly into the empty fields. You can also type into the checkboxes, or you may choose to leave those for filling in by hand after printing.

The “Notes” section on the forms are not fillable; that space is available for you to write in information by hand after printing.

The information you type into the planners can be saved and changed at a later date. You can also download a pdf including just these [freezer cooking planners here](#).

Freezer Cooking: Master List of Recipes

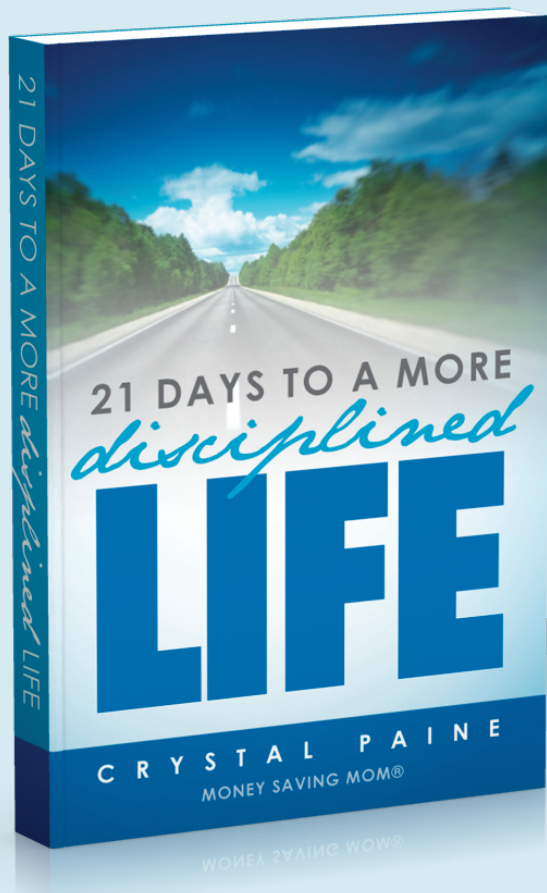
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Do you have ideas, hopes, and dreams for what you want to accomplish in your life, but you feel like you're being held back by a lack of personal discipline?

Are you easily overwhelmed by your big ideas or projects, and you just don't know where to start and how to make real progress? Do you find yourself making "all-or-nothing" plans for transforming your life, and then three days later you crash and burn under the weight of your plan?

What You Can Expect to Learn From This Book

- ✓ How to **prioritize and name your goals** so that you can accomplish them faster than ever.
- ✓ How to **expose the obstacles** that will come up, and then make a plan to conquer them.
- ✓ How to **break up a goal** that feels insurmountable into bite-sized pieces.
- ✓ How to **stop making excuses** and get the job done now — and then enjoy the rest of your day!
- ✓ How to **put accountability in place** to help you stay on task and motivated.

Available for purchase on CrystalPaine.com or on Amazon.



About the Author

Crystal Paine is a child of God, wife, home-schooling mom of three, bargain shopper and owner of MoneySavingMom.com. She is also author of *The Money Saving Mom®'s Budget and 21 Days to a More Disciplined Life.*