



PANTRY & FREEZER ESSENTIALS

What to Stock, Easy and Nutritious Recipes,
and the Benefits of a Well-Prepared Kitchen



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History

The brand name commonly found on various frozen foods in supermarkets is the same as that of the individual who perfected the freezing process: Clarence Birdseye. He is renowned for developing a quick-freezing method in 1924 that effectively preserves the color, nutrients, and overall quality of food. Birdseye was inspired to create this technique after observing how the Inuit indigenous peoples fished and rapidly preserved their daily catches in extreme cold conditions. This innovative method differed significantly from the slow-freezing techniques previously employed, which resulted in the formation of large ice crystals. Birdseye's quick-freezing process ultimately led to 168 patents, encompassing not just the freezing method but also the specific paper and ink used in packaging.

Process of Freezing Fruits and Vegetables

Frozen fruits and vegetables start out just like their fresh versions. However, fresh produce is often harvested before it reaches peak ripeness, allowing it to ripen during transit to stores. In contrast, fruits and vegetables destined for freezing are picked at their prime ripeness. They are then washed, and tougher vegetables like broccoli may be blanched, followed by flash freezing to deactivate the enzymes that cause spoilage. Although thawed frozen fruits and vegetables may be slightly softer in texture, they retain nutrient levels comparable to fresh produce, providing access to delicious offerings throughout the year.

History & Process of Pantry Foods



From Root Cellars to Modern Shelves: A Brief History of Pantry Staples

Before refrigeration and freezing became household norms, people relied on pantries, root cellars, and preserved foods to store nourishment through every season. Dry goods like grains, beans, and dried fruits were essential for survival, while pickling, fermenting, and salting helped extend the life of perishable items. Canning technology emerged in the early 1800s when Frenchman Nicolas Appert developed a method to heat-seal food in glass jars—earning him a government prize from Napoleon for revolutionizing food preservation. This method was later adapted for tin cans and became vital for feeding soldiers, sailors, and eventually households around the world. As food science advanced in the 20th century, shelf-stable foods expanded to include dehydrated, vacuum-sealed, and UHT (ultra-high temperature) pasteurized items, making pantry staples even more varied and convenient.

Today's pantry looks different than it did a century ago, but its role in keeping kitchens stocked, meals quick, and waste minimal remains timeless.



How Pantry Foods Are Processed and Preserved

Most pantry staples are preserved through one or more of the following methods:

- **Drying/Dehydration:** Removing moisture from grains, legumes, herbs, and fruits to prevent spoilage and extend shelf life.
- **Canning:** Food is placed in jars or cans, then heated to kill bacteria and sealed for long-term storage.
- **Vacuum-sealing:** Air is removed to limit oxidation and bacterial growth, often used for nuts, dried fruit, or soups.
- **Pasteurization:** Milk, broths, or shelf-stable juices are heated quickly to kill microbes, then sealed in sterile containers.
- **Fermentation:** Naturally preserves certain foods (like miso, soy sauce, or sauerkraut) while enhancing flavor and nutrients.
- **Oil or brine packing:** Used for items like sundried tomatoes or olives, which are submerged to limit exposure to oxygen and bacteria.

Thanks to these time-tested techniques, pantry staples remain an essential part of a healthy, efficient kitchen—helping bridge the gap between fresh and frozen with lasting flavor and versatility.

The Benefits of Freezing

- Long shelf life
- Less waste- thaw just what you need
- Access to produce outside of regular growing season
- Minimally processed
- Time saving
- Just as nutritious as fresh counterparts
- Can lead to quicker, healthier dinner
- Reduces your stress in the kitchen

Additional resources:

- [Frozen Foods: Convenient and Nutritious](#)



The Benefits of a Well Stocked Pantry

- Long shelf life – No rush to use them up
- Less waste – Use only what you need, when you need it
- Year-round access – Enjoy ingredients outside their growing season
- Minimally processed options – Especially when you choose wisely
- Time-saving – No prep, chopping, or thawing required
- Nutrient-rich – Many canned or dried goods retain essential vitamins and minerals
- Fast-track to healthy meals – Pair with frozen or fresh for a balanced dish in minutes
- Reduces kitchen stress – A well-stocked pantry means fewer last-minute grocery runs





Freezer Staples

STARCHES AND GRAINS

- Brown Rice
- Wild Rice
- Quinoa
- GF bread and whole-grain breads
- Corn tortillas

HERBS & FLAVORINGS

- Ginger
- Garlic
- Basil
- Parsley
- Cilantro

PROTEINS

- Chicken (ground, whole pieces, etc.)
- Turkey (ground, breast, whole)
- Shrimp
- Fish
- Beans

OTHER

- Frozen and minimally processed prepared foods (meatballs, pastas, etc. to use as a base in a pinch)
- Sauces (watch the sodium content)
- Fruit pops
- Chocolate-covered frozen bananas
- Leftover whole-grain pancakes and waffles

VEGETABLES

- Peppers (chopped, sliced, etc.)
- Butternut squash
- Onions (chopped, sliced, etc.)
- Spinach/Kale
- Cauliflower (riced, florets, etc.)
- Broccoli (florets)
- Edamame (shelled)
- Green beans
- Peas
- Corn
- Mixed bags

FRUITS

- Bananas (peeled)
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Raspberries
- Pineapple
- Avocado
- Mixed bags

Did you know breads should not be refrigerated?

Breads lose their freshness in the refrigerator but retain their quality when frozen. When stored in the fridge, moisture evaporates from the bread, resulting in a dry and tough texture.



Pantry Staples

WHOLE GRAINS

- Brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, millet
- Rolled oats or steel-cut oats
- Buckwheat groats, amaranth
- Whole grain pasta or legume-based pasta (like chickpea or lentil pasta)

LEGUMES & PULSES

- Canned or dried black beans, chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans
- Split peas, mung beans
- Low-sodium or BPA-free canned options when possible

NUTS & SEEDS

- Almonds, walnuts, cashews, pecans
- Chia seeds, flaxseeds, hemp hearts, sunflower seeds
- Natural peanut butter, almond butter, tahini

OILS & VINEGARS

- Extra virgin olive oil, avocado oil, toasted sesame oil
- Apple cider vinegar, balsamic vinegar, rice vinegar
- Tamari or coconut aminos
- Dijon mustard, whole grain mustard
- Raw honey, maple syrup (in moderation)

CANNED & JARRED

- Diced tomatoes, tomato paste, passata
- Coconut milk (full fat and light)
- Artichoke hearts, roasted red peppers
- Canned salmon, sardines, mackerel (in water or olive oil)
- Canned pumpkin or pureed squash

HERBS & SPICES

- Sea salt or pink salt, black pepper
- Garlic powder, onion powder, smoked paprika
- Cumin, turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, chili flakes
- Dried herbs: oregano, thyme, rosemary, basil
- Nutritional yeast
- Organic bouillon or stock cubes

SHELF-STABLE PROTEIN OPTIONS

- Canned legumes (as above)
- Canned fish (sardines, salmon, tuna)
- Protein powder (pea, hemp, or whey-based – ideally clean-label)
- Shelf-stable tofu or tempeh (vacuum packed)

BAKING & COOKING BASICS

- Baking soda, baking powder, arrowroot powder
- Almond flour, coconut flour, whole wheat flour
- Natural sweeteners (monk fruit, stevia, coconut sugar)
- Broth concentrates or boxed broth (low sodium)

HEALTHY TREATS & EXTRAS

- Dark chocolate (70%+ cacao)
- Unsweetened cocoa or cacao powder
- Dried fruit (unsulfured apricots, dates, figs, raisins – used sparingly)

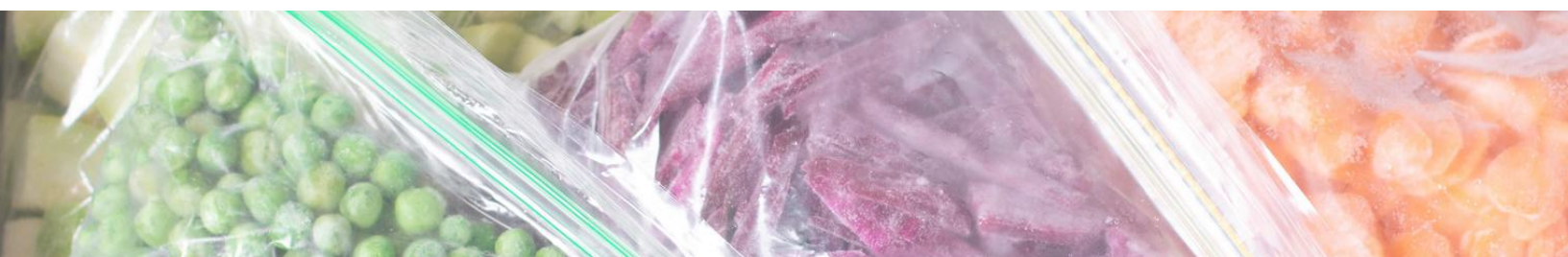
Using and Storing Frozen Items

Best Practices

- Enhance flavors with your preferred herbs and spices.
- Take advantage of a diverse range of frozen ingredients to whip up tasty stir-fries, soups, smoothies, and more!
- Pair your frozen items with staples from your pantry and refrigerator.
- Always have extra bags of frozen products on hand for those times when you're pressed for time.
- Incorporate a variety of textures in your recipes – remember that ingredients will have different consistencies after being frozen (for example, broccoli becomes soft while rice stays firm).

Avoid

- Steaming a bag of plain vegetables and serving it as is
- Adding frozen fruits and vegetables directly to salads
- Overlooking the necessary time for defrosting frozen items, particularly meats, fish, and seafood
- Buying pre-seasoned frozen foods, which can often contain high levels of sodium
- Combining ingredients that all turn soft after cooking, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and squash. While this is suitable for puréed soups and mashes, it may not work well for other dishes.



DIY | Freeze Your Own Foods

- Vacuum sealing is an excellent method for preserving freshness.
- Glass mason jars are ideal for freezing liquids; just remember to leave 25% space at the top to account for expansion during freezing.
- You can freeze items that are typically unavailable in grocery stores.

Freezing Durations for Various Items:

- Scallions: Up to 18 months
- Fresh herbs: Up to 12 months
- Cooked grains and beans: Up to 6 months
- Homemade stock (water + veggie scraps + aromatics): 2-3 months
- Homemade sauces (a great way to use basil, parsley, or cilantro that's beginning to wilt): 2-3 months
- Homemade soups (crafted from other freezer staples): 2-3 months
- Bread (ends of loaves, stale pieces, etc. – perfect for breadcrumbs or bread pudding): 3 months
- Roasted vegetables: Up to 3 months
- Raw vegetables: Up to 6 months
- Fruits (be sure to peel apples, bananas, etc. before freezing): Up to 6 months

How to keep foods separated when freezing:

For single items and foods such as cooked grains, begin by spreading them out on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Freeze for approximately two hours, then remove them from the pan and refreeze. This method will help prevent clumping.

How to Organize & Store Your Pantry Staples

A well-organized pantry not only saves time and money but also helps you eat healthier by making it easier to access nourishing ingredients. Here's how to keep your pantry tidy, functional, and fully stocked:

Group by Category

Organize items into zones so you can easily find what you need:

- Grains & Legumes: rice, quinoa, oats, lentils, canned beans
- Baking & Flours: flour, baking powder, sugar, vanilla, cocoa
- Canned Goods: tomatoes, tuna, coconut milk, soups
- Snacks & Nuts: trail mix, nut butters, crackers, dried fruit
- Spices & Condiments: oils, vinegars, soy sauce, mustard, broth cubes

Use Clear Containers:

- Transfer dry goods into labelled glass or BPA-free airtight containers.

This helps:

- Prevent pests
- Preserve freshness
- Easily see what you have and when it's running low
- Tip: Label with contents + expiry date using a chalk marker or sticker.

First In, First Out (FIFO):

- Store newer items behind older ones to reduce waste. Keep soon-to-expire items at eye level or in a visible "use me soon" basket.
- Make use of vertical space
- Use stackable bins, risers, lazy Susans, or hanging baskets to take advantage of shelves from top to bottom.
- Keep a running inventory
- Post a notepad inside the pantry door or use a pantry inventory app to jot down staples as you use them. This reduces overbuying and supports efficient meal planning.

Bonus Tip:

Store less-used bulk items (like extra rice or flour) in airtight bins in a cool, dark spot—such as a garage shelf or utility closet—to keep your main pantry uncluttered.

Recipes

Edamame Dip

Prep Time: 5 minutes
servings

Total Time: 15 minutes

Yield: 4



Ingredients

- 12 oz shelled frozen edamame, thawed
- 1 clove garlic, minced (or 1 tsp frozen garlic)
- 1 tsp grated fresh ginger (or 2 tsp frozen ginger)
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tsp chopped cilantro (or 2 frozen cubes)
- ½ ripe avocado (or ¼ cup thawed frozen avocado)
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Optional: ¼ tsp ground cumin or red pepper flakes for a kick
- Fresh veggies for dipping: sliced carrots, cucumber, celery, bell pepper

Instructions

Prep Your Veggies

- Wash and slice your carrots, celery, cucumber, or any favorite veggies into dip-friendly sticks.
- Soften Ingredients
- Let frozen edamame, garlic, ginger, and cilantro sit at room temperature for 10–15 minutes if using from frozen.

Blend It Up

- In a food processor, combine the thawed edamame, garlic, ginger, olive oil, lemon juice and zest, and cilantro. Pulse until well mixed.
- Add in the avocado and blend until the mixture becomes creamy and smooth. Scrape down the sides as needed.

Season & Serve

- Taste and season with salt, pepper, and optional cumin or chili flakes. Serve chilled or at room temperature with fresh vegetables.

One-Pot Frozen Shrimp & Broccoli Rice Bowl

Prep Time: 5 minutes
servings

Total Time: 20 minutes

Yield: 4



Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil (pantry)
- 1 cup frozen chopped onion
- 2 tsp frozen minced garlic (or 2 cubes)
- 1 tsp frozen grated ginger (or 1 cube)
- 1½ cup low-sodium vegetable broth (pantry or shelf-stable carton)
- 2 cups frozen cooked brown rice
- 12 oz frozen broccoli florets
- 1 lb frozen shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tsp honey (pantry)
- 1 tbsp + 1 tsp low-sodium soy sauce or tamari (pantry)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- Optional: red pepper flakes (pantry)

Instructions

1. Sauté Base Flavors

2. In a medium pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add frozen chopped onion and cook for about 3 minutes until softened. Add frozen garlic and ginger and stir for another minute until fragrant.

3. Simmer & Steam

4. Pour in the broth and bring to a gentle boil. Add frozen rice and frozen shrimp directly to the pot. Reduce heat, cover, and let simmer for 10 minutes—shrimp should turn opaque and pink.

5. Add Veggies

6. Stir in the frozen broccoli and cook for another 3–5 minutes, until broccoli is just tender but still vibrant.

7. Finish & Season

Note: Remove from heat and stir in honey and soy sauce. Taste and season with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes if desired.

Recipes

Pantry Chickpea and Tomato Curry

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 20 minutes

Yield: 2-4 servings

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil or coconut oil
- 1 small onion (from jar or dried onion flakes)
- 2 garlic cloves (or 1 tsp garlic powder)
- 1 tsp ground ginger or ½ tsp ginger powder
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- ½ tsp smoked paprika or chili flakes (optional)
- 1 can (15 oz) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (14 oz) diced tomatoes
- ½ cup canned coconut milk or evaporated milk
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ½ cup dry rice, quinoa, or couscous (cooked according to package)

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a saucepan. Add onion (rehydrated flakes if using), garlic, ginger, and spices. Sauté for 2–3 minutes.
2. Add chickpeas, tomatoes, and coconut milk. Simmer uncovered for 15 minutes until slightly thickened.
3. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Serve over cooked grain of choice (all pantry items!).

Boost it: Add a spoonful of nut butter or a dash of tahini for extra creaminess and healthy fats.



Tuna & White Bean Salad Bowl

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Total Time: No cooking required

Yield: 2 servings

Ingredients

- 1 can (5–6 oz) tuna in olive oil or water, drained
- 1 can (15 oz) white beans (cannellini or navy), drained and rinsed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp vinegar (apple cider or red wine) or lemon juice (bottled OK!)
- 1 tsp dried parsley or Italian seasoning
- 1 tbsp capers or chopped pickles (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: Add a handful of jarred roasted red peppers or sun-dried tomatoes

Instructions

1. In a mixing bowl, combine tuna and white beans.
2. Drizzle with olive oil and vinegar or lemon juice.
3. Add herbs, capers or pickles, and season to taste.
4. Stir gently to combine and serve at room temperature or chilled.

Serve it with: whole grain crackers, canned olives, or toast from the freezer for a complete meal.



Recipes

Spicy Turkey & Veggie Cauli Skillet

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 25 minutes

Yield: 3-4 servings



Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 cup frozen chopped onion
- 2 cups frozen chopped bell peppers
- 1 lb frozen or fresh ground turkey (93% lean)
- 2 tsp frozen minced garlic (or 2 garlic cubes)
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1½ tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp ground cayenne pepper
- 3 cups frozen riced cauliflower
- 1 can (14 oz) diced tomatoes, low sodium, drained
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- Optional: ¼ cup chopped cilantro (fresh or frozen cubes)

Instructions

1. Sauté the veggies
2. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add frozen onions and bell peppers, sauté for 3–4 minutes until softened.
3. Cook the turkey
4. Add ground turkey to the pan. Break it up with a spoon and cook until it begins to brown.
5. Add flavor
6. Stir in frozen garlic, chili powder, cumin, and cayenne. Continue cooking until turkey is fully browned and fragrant, about 3–4 more minutes.
7. Add rice and tomatoes
8. Mix in frozen cauliflower rice. Cook for 2 minutes. Then add drained canned tomatoes and simmer everything together for 4–5 minutes until heated through.
9. Season and serve
10. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Top with chopped cilantro, if using, and serve warm.

Gumbo

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 50 minutes

Yield: 4 servings



Ingredients

- 1 Tbs olive oil
- 1 cup onion, frozen, chopped
- 2 tsp garlic, frozen, minced (2 frozen cubes)
- 1 tsp ginger, frozen, grated (1 frozen cube)
- 1 1/4 cup vegetable broth, low sodium
- 2 cup brown rice, frozen
- 12 oz broccoli, frozen, florets
- 1 lb. shrimp, frozen, peeled and deveined
- 2 tsp honey
- 1 1/3 Tbs soy sauce, low sodium (or tamari, low sodium)
- Salt and pepper
- Red pepper flakes, optional

Instructions

1. Sauté the vegetables. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the mixed soup vegetables and bell peppers, cooking until they become tender—approximately 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and sauté for an additional minute. Add black pepper, cayenne pepper, and dry thyme.
2. Simmer the broth. Pour the vegetable broth into the pot and bring it to a boil. Once boiling, reduce the heat to a simmer and cover, allowing the gumbo to cook for 20 minutes. Afterward, remove the lid and stir in the shrimp, cooking uncovered until fully cooked.
3. Prepare the rice. While the gumbo is simmering, prepare the frozen brown rice according to the package instructions. Once cooked, divide the rice evenly into serving bowls.
4. Finish and serve. When the gumbo is ready, season it to taste with salt and pepper. Ladle the gumbo over the cooked brown rice and serve immediately.
5. Enjoy!

A close-up photograph of a hand dropping a clove of garlic into a pan. The pan is on a gas stove with a visible flame. In the foreground, there are several red tomatoes on a yellow surface. The background is blurred, showing a kitchen setting.

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