

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 accordingly to the size of 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.

Meat may be cooked frozen or tempered except for a few cuts which require complete thawing (i.e., bulk ground beef, bulk beef patty mix, braising Swiss steak, bulk pork sausage and diced beef for stewing.)

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. (Temper - To remove from freezer and place under refrigeration for a period of time sufficient to facilitate separation and handling of frozen product. Internal temperature of the food should be approximately 26° F. to 28° F.). 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.

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING FROZEN FOODS

RAW CHICKEN: Remove whole chickens from shipping containers and thaw in individual wrappers (plastic bags). To thaw parts or quarters, remove intermediate containers from shipping containers; remove overwrapping from intermediate containers and open intermediate containers to expose inner wrapping. Length of thawing period under refrigeration (36° F. to 38° F.) will vary according to size of chicken and refrigeration conditions.

Approximate Thawing Times: Chicken, whole - 37 hours; Chicken, quarters - 52 hours; Chicken, cut-up - 52 hours

PRECOOKED BREADED CHICKEN, NUGGETS OR FILLETS: DO NOT THAW before cooking.

PRECOOKED UNBREADED CHICKEN FILLETS: Temper. DO NOT THAW before cooking.

PREPARED FROZEN CHILIES RELLENOS, BURRITOS, PIZZAS, ENCHILADAS, LASAGNA, TAMALES, MANICOTTI, CANNELLONI: DO NOT THAW before cooking.

TURKEY: Remove turkeys from shipping containers. Thaw in individual wrappers under refrigeration (36° F. to 38° F.)

Approximate Thawing Times: Turkey, whole (16 lbs or less - 2 days; Turkey, whole (over 16 lbs) - 3 to 4 days; Turkey, boneless - 12 to 16 hours; Turkey, ground – thaw; Turkey sausage patties and links - cook frozen

FROZEN EGGS: Thaw under refrigeration (36 F. to 38 F.) or covered with cold water. Thirty pound cans require at least 2 days to thaw, 10 lb cans or cartons require at least 1 day.

FROZEN PIZZA BLEND CHEESE: If pizza blend cheese is received and stored as a frozen product, it should be thawed under refrigeration (36° F. to 38° F.) to ensure retention of its characteristic flavor, texture, and appearance. Thawing at room temperature will encourage bacterial growth (inherent in the product) resulting in an undesirable flavor and swelling of the container.