

# How to use your freezer to the max this summer

Freezing food prolongs its life and helps reduce food waste. Find out which foods you can freeze - and the best ways to defrost them

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Freezing food won't restore freshness, but it will keep it in its current state so you can enjoy it at a later date. You might be surprised to find out how many different types of food can be frozen safely without compromising on quality.

The UK wastes around 9.5 million tonnes of food every year (or 70kg per person). This is not only costly, it also has a negative impact on the environment.

Waste and Resources Action Plan (Wrap) reported that, in 2021/2022, 18 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were caused by food waste in the UK. So it's incredibly important to reduce our food waste at home, and freezing food - particularly during warmer months, when it can go off more quickly - can help to do this.

Find out which foods can be frozen and for how long, plus the safest ways to defrost them.

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## Foods you can freeze



Most foods that are suitable for freezing will say so on the label and you can freeze pre-packed food up to (or on) its use-by date. If you freeze it any later, the risk of food poisoning increases.

We recommend you store foods in individual sealed containers to stop anything nasty getting in and to avoid cross-contamination.

Some foods can't cope with being frozen without the quality being affected. They might become watery, limp and unpleasant to eat. Also, food is more likely to deteriorate or suffer from freezer burn the longer you keep it in the freezer.

The NHS recommends that you do not refreeze any food that has been frozen before. The more times you freeze and reheat food, the higher the risk of food poisoning.

[Find out the best temperature to keep your freezer](#) to keep your food safe and fresh.

## Can you freeze cheese?

Yes. Hard cheeses can withstand freezing conditions and will last well up to two months in the freezer. You can sprinkle frozen grated cheese straight onto your meal, so you don't have to defrost it in advance.

It's safe to freeze soft cheese, but this is not recommended as it ends up very watery when defrosted. This includes cheeses such as brie, feta and cream cheese. That said, if you have soft cheese in a recipe - such as a pasta sauce - this will freeze much better.

It's important you freeze frozen cheese too, but double-check the advice on the label first.

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It's likely you can freeze lactose-free cheese too, but double-check the advice on the label first.

### Can you freeze mushrooms?

Yes. You can freeze mushrooms in an airtight container for up to three months, allowing you to keep them for longer than the recommended seven days in a fridge. It's safe to freeze them raw, but cooking them first will help them retain more flavour.

### Can you freeze cooked rice?

Yes. Whether it's an accompaniment to a meal or on its own, cooked rice will survive in the freezer for three to six months. However, it might dry out the longer you keep it frozen.

The Food Standards Authority (FSA) says you should never reheat rice more than once – and make sure it's heated right through before serving.

It adds: 'If you have leftover rice, you should chill it as quickly as possible, ideally within one hour. Dividing it into smaller portions can help with this. Also, don't leave rice in the rice cooker, steamer or pan to cool down.'

Be sure to avoid these [common food storage mistakes](#) to keep your food fresher for longer.

### Can you freeze milk?

Definitely. You can safely freeze opened or unopened milk for up to one month, as long as it's frozen by the best-before date. However, don't freeze a full plastic container of milk or milk in a glass bottle, as these could expand, crack and explode. One to two inches at the top of a non-glass container should be enough space to allow the milk to expand safely. Or try freezing milk in an ice cube tray for a quick way to add milk to recipes or iced coffee.

A lot of milk alternatives are mostly made from water and perfectly safe to freeze, but double-check the label for recommendations from the manufacturer. For example, soya milk is known to separate when frozen.

### Can you freeze cooked chicken?

Yes. But get it in the freezer as soon as possible after cooking, once it has cooled down to fridge temperature. You can keep it in the freezer for three to six months.

### Can you freeze cooked pasta?

Yes. Both cooked and fresh pasta can be frozen for up to four weeks.

### Can you freeze bananas?

Absolutely. Freeze them in a sealed bag or container for up to three months. They can be a bit mushy when defrosted, though, so it's best to use frozen bananas for things like smoothies or banana bread.

Freezing bananas unpeeled is likely to keep them in a better condition for longer than freezing them peeled and chopped up.

### Other foods you can freeze

Here are other popular foods that you can freeze and for how long:

- Avocado: three months
- Bacon: three to six months
- Butter: three months
- Double cream: three months
- Tomatoes: six months

### Other foods you can't freeze

Most foods can be frozen as long as they are still in date. However, some will deteriorate or separate in the process, such as:

- Fried or oily food
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Vegetables with a high water content (such as cucumber or lettuce)
- Yoghurt and single cream

See our [top tips on how to optimise the space in your freezer to prevent food waste](#).

### How to defrost food safely





The FSA recommends that you should defrost food in the fridge, then cook it within 24 hours. If a food product is safe to cook from frozen, it'll say so on the packaging.

You shouldn't defrost high-risk foods on the kitchen counter, such as milk or chicken. This is because bacteria are more likely to develop on food kept between 8°C and 63°C.

Some microwaves and toasters have a defrost setting, but keep an eye on it to make sure your food doesn't start cooking. Some air fryers, such as the [TowerT17102 Vortex Vizion](#), have a specific defrost function, but you'll need to cook your food straight after. Double-check it is fully defrosted before cooking; the inside is the last part to thaw out, so check it's not still frozen.

In the market for a new freezer? Find the best on the market in our [freezer](#) or [fridge freezer](#) reviews.

## How to defrost meat and poultry: chicken, sausages and mince

Meat and poultry are high-risk foods, and you should defrost both uncooked and cooked meat in the fridge. In a fridge, it'll generally take 10-12 hours per kilo to defrost.

To speed things up a little, you can run it under cold running water while in a container.

## How to defrost prawns and fish

Like meat, prawns and fish are high-risk foods, so it's best to defrost them in the fridge. Or you can run them under cold water to get the job done faster.

Freezing food isn't for everyone, especially if you only have a small freezer. These [food storage tips](#) will help your food last longer in the fridge.

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