



The \$5 Dinner Mom's

ULTIMATE FREEZER COOKING GUIDE



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The \$5 Dinner Mom's Ultimate Freezer Cooking Guide

Everything You Ever Needed to Know
about Saving Time, Money and Sanity
with Freezer Cooking ~ plus 70 Freezer
Friendly Recipes

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CONTENTS

Why Freezer Cooking	5
What You Can Freeze	6
What you Cannot Freeze	7
The General “How To” Prepare Something for the Freezer	7
Recommended Packaging	8
Freezer Meal Space, Inventory & Food Rotation	10
Freezer Cooking Methods & Strategies to Save Money and Time	12
Freezer Cooking Tutorials	16
How to Freeze Strawberries	16
How to Freeze Blueberries.....	16
How to Freeze Raspberries.....	16
How to Freeze Butternut Squash	17
How to Freeze Ears of Corn	17
How to Freeze Green Beans	17
How to Freeze Zucchini	17
How to Blanche and Freeze Broccoli	18
How to Freeze Hatch Chiles	19
How to Freeze Carrot Juice for Smoothies	19
How to Freeze Fresh Herbs	19
How to Freeze Homemade Freezer Jam.....	19
How to Freeze Cookie Dough	20
Freezing Pizza Dough	22
Meats	26
How to Cook a Whole Chicken in the Slow Cooker	27
Zucchini Meatballs	28
BBQ Meatball Sliders	29
Enchilada Meatloaf	30
Italian Meatloaf	31

Hawaiian Meatloaf.....	32
Freezer Friendly Maple Dijon Salmon Marinade	34
Cranberry-Apple Orange Pork Roast	35
Taco Meat	36
Taco Meat with Beans	37
Stews, Soups, Chili & Sauces	38
Beef & Butternut Squash Stew	40
Moroccan Beef Stew.....	41
Butternut, Apple, Pear Soup	42
Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup	44
Italian Wedding Soup	45
Butternut Squash Chili	46
Chicken Enchilada Chili	47
Chili with Cornbread Waffles	48
Chuckwagon Chili.....	49
Corn & Chicken Chili	50
Heat 'n Sweet Chili	51
Pumpkin Chili	52
Sausage Chili	53
Slow Cooker Chili with Skillet Cornbread	54
Skillet Cornbread recipe.....	54
Spicy 15 Bean Chili.....	55
Spicy Southern Chili in Homemade Bread Bowls.....	56
Erin's Chunky Spaghetti Sauce.....	58
Homemade Sloppy Joe Mix.....	59
Freezer Friendly Vegetable Alfredo Sauce.....	60
Casseroles & Enchiladas	61
Chicken and Spinach Enchiladas	62
Southwest Macaroni and Cheese.....	63
Butternut Cranberry Rice Pilaf.....	64

Sweet Potato Black Bean Enchiladas	65
Freezer Friendly Stovetop Ratatouille	66
Tater Tot Shepherd's Pie	67
Breads	68
Freezer Friendly Sweet & Savory Sausage Breakfast Muffins	70
Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins.....	71
Pumpkin Muffins with Cinnamon-Pecan Streusel.....	72
Freezer Friendly Blueberry Oatmeal Pancakes.....	74
Pancakes with Peach Syrup	75
Carrot Cake Pancakes With Cream Cheese Syrup.....	76
Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Waffles	77
Homemade Freezer Friendly Whole Wheat Pizza Crust	78
Coconut Key Lime Bread.....	80
Overnight Slow Cooker Baked Oatmeal	82
Peaches & Cream Baked Oatmeal	83
Pumpkin Spice Baked Oatmeal	84
Baked Oatmeal with Scrambled Eggs	85
Strawberry Rhubarb Baked Oatmeal.....	86
Triple Berry Baked Oatmeal	87
Whole Wheat Pumpkin Cinnamon Rolls.....	88
Freezer Must Haves	90
Mashed Sweet Potatoes.....	91
Mashed Potatoes	92
Cooked Dried Beans.....	93
Freezing Cookie Dough	94
How to Freeze Fresh Herbs	95
Homemade Pumpkin Pie Spice	96
Homemade Apple Pie Spice.....	97
Homemade Ranch Dressing Seasoning Mix	98
No Sugar Strawberry Freezer Jam.....	99

Freezer Smoothies - Make Ahead	100
No Bake Cookie Smoothie	101
Dana's Mango Smoothie	102
Orange, Mango, Banana Dessert Smoothies	103
Banana, Strawberry, Peach Smoothie	104
Mango Raspberry Smoothie	105
Pomegranate Smoothie	106
Kale, Kiwi, Apple, & Banana Smoothie	107
Berry Cherry Jubilee Green Smoothie	108
Fiesta Breakfast Smoothie	109
Free Printable Resources.....	110

Why Freezer Cooking

It's Thursday. And it's going to be a great day. I get the kids dropped off at school on time. With full lunchboxes and water bottles. And I manage to squeeze a few hours of work into the morning, complete with blog post writing, conference calls and new team member set up. I've enjoyed my salad for lunch and then the call comes in..."ELEMENTARY SCHOOL" flashes on my phone.

It's never good when the school calls.

It was the nurse.

Stitches are in order after a fall on the playground at recess.

I scoop up the baby, call my mom to see if she can pick up the preschooler, and make my way to the school to pick up the older 2 kids and head to the pediatric urgent care. It wasn't a major cut, and I didn't feel the need for a trip to the hospital ER. I figured I'd have a shorter wait (and drive) if we went to the nearby urgent care. Also, I had to figure in a trip to the drugstore for the gauze and bandages that we will need for the post-stitches care. By my calculations, it would be dinner time by the time all this was said and done and I would be completely depleted of all energy from keeping the little folks busy and occupied for hours at the urgent care & drugstore. I wasn't planning on this little afternoon adventure so I didn't start the slow cooker earlier in the day. Ruh oh...what to do?!

Rather than call for takeout and spend more \$\$ than I needed to for the day (urgent care co-pay plus drugstore stop = expensive!), I texted my husband and asked him to pull out some sloppy joe meat and slider buns from the freezer. I told him how to quickly thaw the cooked meat and sauce and reheat it, and when we arrived home the house smelled amazing with the sloppy joe meat gently bubbling on the stovetop. We avoided a \$40 restaurant bill on a weeknight when we didn't need to be spending \$\$ on take out.

Freezer Meals FTW (for the win)!

We all have those days. I have them more often than I prefer, but that's life. It's busy, it's fast, it's hectic, and sometimes it needs stitches.

It helps having backup on these days. Specifically, food-in-the-freezer type backup.

And this is what I love about freezer meals. They not only help on afternoons like the ones described above, they also help cut down on overall time spent in the kitchen, and save me just enough mental and emotional energy to get through the

dreaded late afternoon witching hour when everyone needs my attention. I've always said that being one step ahead of yourself when it comes to meals - both cooking and planning them - can do wonders on saving time, money and shreds of sanity.

In this freezer cooking guide, I'm going to share with you a few different concepts and ways that I make freezer meals work for our family. But before we get to the various freezer cooking methods, there are a few others items and housekeeping issues to discuss first.

What You Can Freeze

So what foods can you freeze? Most foods can be frozen. Complete meals can be frozen before they are cooked or after they are baked. Individual ingredients can be frozen. Just about anything can be frozen to use at a later date (except what's listed in the next section.)

Here's a short list that will make you hungry. Prepare to salivate.

- Spaghetti sauce
- Sloppy joe sauce
- Taco meat
- Creamy Cajun sauce
- Hamburger patties (made with bacon bits or BBQ sauce, or whatever you prefer!)
- Meatloaf & meatballs
- Stuffed manicotti and pasta casseroles
- Enchiladas and burritos - both dinner and breakfast burritos
- Chili, soup and stews
- Marinated meat, chicken and fish
- Sliced meats for fajitas or stir-fries
- Shredded chicken or beef or pork, for tacos or sliders or sandwiches
- Breads like pizza dough, cookie dough, cinnamon rolls, biscuits, loaf breads, muffins, pancakes, and waffles
- Cooked beans (cheaper, healthier and just as easy as using canned beans)
Cooked and mashed potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Fresh produce that you plan to use in smoothies or in baked goods or stews/soups
- Shredded cheese (Always stock up when you see great sale prices and stash in the freezer!)

What you Cannot Freeze

This is a very short list of what you cannot freeze. Here is what I don't recommend freezing:

Pasta or potato salads with mayonnaise, or anything with mayonnaise for that matter. The mayo will separate as it thaws and just eewww.

Sliced cheese and blocks of cheese don't do well in the freezer. The cheese loses some of its grease/fat and sturdiness as it thaws and I prefer not to freeze it. Shredded cheese is the exception which is why it's in the "yes, freeze" list above.

Raw potatoes. So I do freeze some raw potatoes in slow cooker freezer packs, but I've soaked them and they are generally coated in BBQ sauce or broth to keep them from browning and oxidizing. To play it safe, you can leave the potatoes out of those bags and add them to the meal when you go to prepare it.

Fresh produce that won't be cooked or blended into a smoothie. Fresh produce will lose its rigidity as the water content in the fruit will leak out as the fruit thaws. Most fruits will mush-out after being frozen. I only freeze fresh produce that I plan to cook or bake with, or puree in a smoothie.

Speaking of fresh produce, lettuce will turn soggy if you freeze it. The only greens that I freeze are kale and spinach that I add to my smoothies.

The General "How To" Prepare Something for the Freezer

There is a distinct process for preparing meals or ingredients for the freezer and I find myself repeating this over and over and over in different recipes, blog posts and freezer meal plans. Here is the basic run-down for how to freeze things, whether raw or cooked:

1. Let the food cool down completely. Freezing completely cooled food will help reduce freezer burn!
2. Package up and remove as much as air possible if using a plastic baggie. If using a plastic container and freezing liquid, be sure to leave enough headspace at the top, as the liquid will expand as it freezes. Add item to the freezer.
3. Keep in the fridge freezer for 3-6 months, or in the deep freezer for 6-12 months.

4. Thaw completely in the fridge overnight or for up to 2 days if it is 'thick.' If you need the food that day, or within 30 minutes, you can let it soak in a warm bowl of water and it will quickly thaw. The thickness of the baggie or container will determine how long it will take to thaw. When I 'quick-thaw' things, it can take anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour.
5. Reheat as directed in the recipe.
6. If baking a casserole from partially frozen, I recommend baking between 1 ½ and 2 times longer than recommended by the recipe, depending on how thawed the food is before you bake it.

Note: If utilizing the quick thaw method, please don't leave raw meat out on the counter in a bowl of warm water. Always let raw meat thaw in the refrigerator to keep it at proper cold temperatures. If using a cooked sauce, let it thaw partially or completely before reheating.

As you read the recipes included in this guide, or any freezer friendly recipe in The \$5 Meal Plan, or recipe post on \$5 Dinners, you'll see directions along these lines.

Recommended Packaging

When it comes to packaging for freezer meals, I recommend a few products.

- **Gallon size plastic freezer baggies** - These are what I use most commonly in my freezer cooking. I find myself using them for parts of meals or certain sauces or foods like mashed potatoes. I use them for cooked meats and sauces like spaghetti sauce or sloppy joe meat or taco meat. I use them for shredded beef or chicken or pork. I also use them when marinating chicken, beef or pork. I load them with slices of loaf bread or muffins and sometimes waffles or pancakes. I will add meatballs or meatloaf that's wrapped in foil into a baggie to add an extra layer from the cold air to help reduce freezer burn.

I do reuse the baggies that did NOT contain any raw meat. I have a 'muffins bag' that I wash and reuse regularly. I also will wash and reuse spaghetti sauce bags one or two times before starting a fresh new baggie. Just don't reuse bags that you marinated or stored raw meat in...yuck!

- **Plastic storage containers** - I prefer plastic storage containers like rubbermaid or tupperware when freezing larger batches of soups or chilis. These 'heavier' and larger batches can be weighty enough to break a plastic baggie, so I use plastic containers for those items.

- **Disposable baking pans & foil** - These disposable trays items are best to use for pasta casseroles, enchiladas, lasagna, etc. They can be reused if you wash them gently by hand with soap and warm water. I like to use these because I don't have enough glass or metal casserole dishes to leave any in the freezer for an extended period of time. When covering these disposable trays, I recommend using the 'heavy duty' foil that is slightly thicker or the non-stick foil to keep the cheese or top of the casserole from sticking to the foil.

"Do I need a vacuum sealer for my freezer meals?" is a common question that I hear from aspiring freezer cooking chefs. My answer is another question, "How long do you plan on leaving the food in your freezer?"

If you plan to leave your food in the freezer for longer than 2 months, then I would recommend a vacuum sealer. Around our house, food doesn't generally stay in the freezer that long, so I don't end up vacuum sealing that often. Entirely up to you whether or not to invest in one!

Freezer Meal Space, Inventory & Food Rotation

To save space, I recommend [‘flat freezing’](#) in baggies and disposable pans. When making things like spaghetti sauce and chili or soups or anything that is fluid/liquid, add it to a plastic freezer baggie and let it fill up the baggie so you can lay it flat. Remove as much air from the baggie as you can (using a vacuum sealer, or even a straw!) and seal it tight and flat.



Freezing things flat in the freezer will help save space and make it easier for you to get them out of the freezer. It will also help reduce the thawing time. Baggies that have been flat frozen do not take nearly as long to thaw, especially if you place them in a bowl or shallow dish filled with warm water. In just a matter of minutes, your sauce will be thawed.

Note: If utilizing the quick thaw method, please don't leave raw meat out on the counter in a bowl of warm water. Always let raw meat thaw in the refrigerator to keep it at proper cold temperatures. If using a cooked sauce, let it thaw partially or completely before reheating.

Printable Freezer Inventory List

At the end of the guide, you'll find a printable freezer inventory list that you can print out and post on your freezer to help keep track of what's inside. This will assist

you in rotating through your foods quickly, so nothing gets left in the bottom of the freezer for years.

Erin's Freezer Stash

I wanted to share a handful of items that I almost always have in my freezer at any given time. As soon as the inventory for these things starts to run low, I adjust my meal plan to either do a 'full cook/prep' or 'batch cook' a few meals in a week to replenish the supply in the freezer. (More on the different methods in the next section.)

- Cooked and shredded chicken.
- Homemade chicken stock. (Made when I cooked the whole chicken for the shredded chicken.)
- Spaghetti sauce
- Sloppy Joe sauce
- Meatballs and/or meatloaf
- Variety of frozen veggies (generally the larger bags from Costco)
- Bread of some kind
- French fries or tater tots
- Homemade muffins or loaf bread
- Homemade pancakes or waffles
- Breakfast burritos for my husband's morning commute
- Casseroles or enchiladas

Having a steady supply of these items and parts of meals in the freezer regularly keeps me out of the drive-thru lane or from grabbing take out. Spending just a few minutes extra a week to get meals into the freezer can save me hundreds of dollars a month on restaurant bills!

Freezer Cooking Methods & Strategies to Save Money and Time

A number of different concepts and methods for making freezer meals exist and I thought it prudent to take a moment to discuss each one.

- **Bulk or Batch Cooking** – Bulk or batch cooking is doubling or tripling favorite recipes and freezing what you don't eat that meal. These are easy to incorporate into your weekly meal plan, as you're already in the kitchen working on the meal so why not double it up.
- **Weekly Freezer Cooking Sessions** – Once a week, you can prepare 5-6 meals for dinner and another meal or two for breakfast or lunch. These cooking sessions can take between 2-3 hours to complete, depending on what you are cooking.
- **Monthly Freezer Cooking Sessions** – These power-cooking sessions can produce 20-40 meals in 4-8 hours time. Cooking meals for a month can come in handy for everyday living, or for when life throws you curveballs or babies! After surgery or having a baby, having food stashed in the freezer is crucial...both for time and sanity saving reasons.
- **1 Hour Power Freezer Cooking Sessions** – If you want a little more focused cooking session, then plan an hour to get 4-5 meals or prepared ingredients into the freezer. Brown some ground beef, mix up some meatballs, bake some muffins and cook a double batch of pancakes to freeze as well. Set the timer and get to work!
- **Slow Cooker Freezer Packs** – These packs are 'dump and run' packs that you prepare ahead of time and in batches to keep in the freezer. They can be thawed and then cooked all together in the slow cooker. I use gallon size freezer baggies and load them up with everything you need for that meal and then freeze. I let them thaw partially or completely before adding them to the slow cooker and cooking as directed. These are a great way quickly prepare your favorite slow cooker, freezer friendly meals. If you're interested in a plan that makes 20 Meals for \$150, you can [learn more here](#).

Money Saving Freezer Strategies

I would challenge you to utilize the freezer as a money saving tactic. As you watch the sales and prices at the grocery store, please start stocking up on the meats and veggies when you see them on sale.

When you see boneless skinless chicken breast on sale for \$1.99/lb., I beg of you to please buy enough packages to last until the next sale (usually 6-8 weeks later!) While every grocery store's sales cycle differ slightly, if you watch your stores closely, you'll start to notice a pattern of when they offer best prices on meats.

As you slowly begin to fill your freezer with meats and veggies, you'll discover a shift in the way that you grocery shop and plan your meals. Instead of planning then shopping, you'll find yourself shopping, filling your pantry and freezer, and **THEN** planning your meals based on what you purchased at rock bottom prices and what you have in your house!

While both options, meal planning then shopping & shopping then meal planning, are great money saving strategies, I have found that *shopping the sales and stocking up, then planning around what you have on hand is the best way to save more money in the long run.*

Here's a peek of what that looks like...

Week 1 – chuck roasts and split chicken breasts are on sale. Organic baby carrots are on sale, as are yellow onions and sweet potatoes.

Your Shopping Plan: Purchase 3-4 roasts, 3-4 packages of split chicken breasts, 3-4 bags of baby carrots, an extra bag of yellow onions, and triple the amount of sweet potatoes you would normally purchase.

To Freeze Plan: Marinate the beef roasts & chicken pieces, or just freeze them and marinate later. Freeze the baby carrots to use in soups or stews. Chop up or slice and freeze the extra bag of onions to use in soups, stews, sauces and fajitas. Make a triple batch of [mashed sweet potatoes](#) and freeze what you don't eat for dinner that night.

Week 2 – Pork chops are on sale, as are celery and the last of the strawberries for the season.

Your Shopping Plan: Purchase 3-4 packs of pork chops, and extra stalk of celery, and as many strawberries as you can fit into your budget.

To Freeze Plan: Marinate the pork chops, or just freeze them and marinate later. Chop up the celery and freeze in 2 cup portions to use for soups, stews and casseroles. Remove the stems from the strawberries and flash freeze (details in Freezing Tutorials section) to use in smoothies later.

Week 3...it goes on and on. After a few weeks, you'll have all kinds of food in your freezer and pantry to start making up meals. Eventually your shopping list will be just fresh produce, dairy and bread. Then, you'll need to purchase more meat when it goes on sale again and keep the rotation going. Just remember to keep enough on hand for what your family needs. Over time, you'll fall into a nice rhythm and will enjoy all kinds of savings, too!

Time Saving Freezing Strategies

Smoothie Packs

Set aside a few minutes on the weekend or when you have the energy on a weekday evening and package up what you would normally add to the blender in a quart size freezer baggie.

Pour some milk or yogurt into an ice cube tray, then freeze.

To each make ahead smoothie baggie, add a few cubes of frozen milk or yogurt in with your favorite fruits and freeze it all up!

When you're ready to make your smoothie, just dump it all in, add a little water or juice so it will blend well and puree away!

You'll find some great smoothie recipes at the end of the recipe section of the guide. Use those or your favorite smoothie combinations to make 10-20 packages of Make Ahead Smoothie Mixes at a time.

This is a great way to take advantage of sales on produce...you can buy a few extra pineapples when they go on sale for 98¢ (price I saw in early November 2014 in Texas!). Cut them all up and freeze with some bananas and apples or bananas and oranges and there'll be cheap smoothies ahead for you!

Baking Mixes

If you ever purchase larger amounts of flour, sugar and other baking ingredients from a warehouse store, then it helps to set aside some time to make some baggies with the mixes premeasured out. Then you just dump and add the egg, oil, milk and other liquid ingredients for baked goods like pancakes, waffles, muffins, etc.

While it takes a few minutes to measure everything out, it sure makes a huge difference on those busy afternoons to have everything pre-mixed and ready to

dump. Because when you have little ones under foot or work full time or are going through a tough time in life, every minute in the kitchen counts!

These baking mixes can be stored in the pantry if they are sealed well, but when I make a huge batch of them I prefer to store them in the freezer. I roll up the labeled bags and place them in a plastic container that fits in my deep freezer with the label facing up. Then I can quickly grab what I need and get to making it.

I don't usually worry about the flour being cold when I prepare foods, as it warms up quickly in the stand mixer when I'm making the batter. You can always pull it out early to let it warm up to room temperature, but if you forget it's ok. (I forget all the time!)

Freezer Cooking Tutorials

In this next section, I will show you how to prepare individual items or ingredients for the freezer. Any clickable link will take you to the tutorial and photos on \$5 Dinners.

Fruits & Vegetables

[How to Freeze Strawberries](#)

- Wash and pat dry strawberries.
- To flash freeze whole strawberries for smoothies, cut off the stem.
- Lay on their sides on a rimmed baking sheet.
- Place in the freezer for 20 minutes or so.
- Remove from the freezer and scoop off the sheet. Use a spatula if any are stubborn and had the chance to freeze to the sheet.
- Place in a plastic storage container or plastic freezer baggies.
- To freeze cut strawberries for muffins, breads, and pancakes, cut them into bite size pieces and place them in a plastic freezer baggie and press them flat.
- Seal and remove as much air as you can.
- **Note:** Once the strawberries are frozen, they will not have their same shape or texture. That's why they should be used in smoothies or for baking.

[How to Freeze Blueberries](#)

- Rinse your blueberries and dry them with paper towels gently.
- Lay them out in baking dishes and place them in the freezer to flash freeze them.
- Once frozen, transfer the blueberries into quart size freezer baggies.
- Use them for smoothies, pancakes or muffins.

[How to Freeze Raspberries](#)

- Rinse the raspberries and drain them for a few minutes in a strainer.
- Place them on a paper towel to remove excess water.
- Arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet.
- Freeze for a few hours to flash freeze, and then transfer frozen raspberries into freezer bags.

[How to Freeze Butternut Squash](#)

- Butternut Squash can be frozen “raw.”
- Peel, dice and then freeze.
- Dice into larger chunks and smaller pieces and place in separate bags for the freezer.
- Add the smaller frozen pieces to risotto, rice pilaf, brown rice, orzo, or quinoa.
- Roast the larger frozen, raw butternut squash pieces as a delicious and healthy side dish.
- Or use the larger frozen chunks in soups, stews or slow cooker recipes.

[How to Freeze Ears of Corn](#)

- Shuck the corn.
- Wrap each ear in plastic wrap.
- Wrap them all up in foil and/or drop into a freezer plastic bag.
- When ready to use, unwrap and drop them frozen in boiling water for 4-5 minutes or until ready.
- **Alternate method:** blanch corn for 4-6 minutes in boiling water, submerge in an ice bath for 4-6 minutes, dry off and then freeze using the method above.

[How to Freeze Green Beans](#)

Fresh green beans should be blanched before frozen.

- Rinse and remove stem tips
- Boil green beans for 2-3 minutes.
- Immediately transfer the green beans to a bowl filled with water and ice cubes. Let sit for 5-10 minutes. Drain and pat dry.
- Freeze in freezer baggies or plastic container.

[How to Freeze Zucchini](#)

You can shred zucchini for recipes like zucchini bread. Dice for recipes like chunky zucchini muffins and chunk or slice zucchini to freeze and drop into smoothies.

- Slice, dice, or shred zucchini for future recipes and place in a freezer bag or container and freeze until ready to use!

[How to Blanche and Freeze Broccoli](#)

Broccoli freezes really well only if you blanch it first! Blanching keeps the color crisp and green while preventing the broccoli from getting mushy after thawing. Here's how:

- Fill a pot with water, add salt, and bring to a rolling boil.
- Wash and snip broccoli into pieces. You want the pieces to be uniform in size as much as possible.
- Fill a separate bowl with water and ice cubes.
- Add the broccoli to the boiling water in small batches. Cook for 2-3 minutes until heated but not mushy.
- Remove the broccoli from the water and place in the bowl of ice water.
- Leave in the ice water for a few minutes until no longer warm. Drain thoroughly.
- Repeat with remaining broccoli as needed.
- Air dry or pat down broccoli with paper towels before placing in freezer bags or containers. Freeze.

How to Freeze Peppers & Onions

Spot a hot sale on bell peppers?! Grab extras and freeze with onions for your next fajita meal!

- Seed and slice 2 bell peppers, 1 hot pepper (such as serrano, poblano or jalapeno) and slice 1 onion. Add the 3 peppers and onion slices into a plastic baggie and label "for Fajitas".
- Let thaw completely and pat dry before sautéing or grilling. Season with a little salt and pepper and taco or fajita seasoning as they are cooking.

How to Freeze the 'Cajun Trinity' Vegetables

Whenever I see onions or celery on sale around the holidays, I like to grab a few extra stalks or bags to chop up for the freezer.

- Chop onions, peppers and celery into 1/4" or smaller pieces. Mix equal amounts of each together and place into a plastic freezer baggie or small plastic container.
- Use in your favorite soup or stew that calls for the Cajun veggie trifecta.
- I recommend freezing in 2-3 cup portions, as that amount will work for most recipes.

[How to Freeze Hatch Chiles](#)

- Dice the peppers and freeze them in ½ cup portions in a small plastic container or freezer baggies. This will give you just the amount you need for recipes that call for 4 oz. canned green chile peppers.
- Make sure to label the freezer bag and date it. The chilies will be good in the freezer for up to 12 months.

[How to Freeze Carrot Juice for Smoothies](#)

- Juice fresh carrots.
- Pour into ice cube trays.
- Freeze completely and then break the cubes out and store them in a plastic freezer bag. Use 2-3 cubes in your smoothies.

[How to Freeze Fresh Herbs](#)

- Soak your fresh herbs in water.
- Rinse thoroughly.
- Puree with some water or oil like olive oil. Any combination of herbs will do.
- Freeze in ice cube trays.
- Once frozen, pop out of the trays and store in a freezer baggie or container.
- Enjoy in your favorite pasta sauces, soups and stews!
- And don't forget...you can always use a combination of Italian type herbs to make a great pesto and freeze that too!

[How to Freeze Homemade Freezer Jam](#)

- Ladle the homemade jam into freezer containers and place in the refrigerator overnight to let it cool slowly and set.
- Then store in the freezer.
- Good in the freezer for up to 1 year, in the fridge for 3 weeks.

Cookies & Breads

[How to Freeze Cookie Dough](#)

Freezing Cookie Dough Balls

- Simply scoop out dough and roll into a small dough ball and place onto a piece of wax paper on a baking sheet.
- Flash freeze for 20-30 minutes, then transfer dough balls to plastic freezer baggie. You could also lay the balls flat in a plastic freezer baggie and freeze them in a “tray form.”
- Freeze, up to 3 months.

To cook, pull out the ones you will cook and place them on the baking sheet and let them warm up some while the oven preheats. I've found that if they just get a few minutes out of the freezer to warm up to room temp, the baking time does not need to be modified from the original recipe. If you are taking them straight from the freezer to a hot oven, I'd add no more than 2 minutes of cooking time...watch them closely to not over bake!

Freezing Cookie Dough Rolls

- If you want to make cookies using the “slice and bake” method, then I recommend freezing the dough in a log shape.
- Lay out a piece of aluminum foil and then a sheet of plastic wrap over the foil.
- Drop the dough onto the plastic wrap and shape into a circular log, much like the “rolls” that you purchase at the grocery store. Press until it's uniform in shape.
- Wrap the plastic wrap around it and twist off the ends. Then wrap the foil around the plastic wrap.
- Freeze, up to 3 months.

To bake, slice and bake as directed in the recipe. Thicker slices may require an additional 1 to 1 1/2 minutes of cooking if the slice is mostly frozen.

How to Freeze Breakfast Breads

Muffins

Once your muffins have baked, let them cool completely before adding them to a plastic baggie or container. Fill up the baggie or container and freeze the muffins.

Muffins will thaw in a few minutes on the countertop, or you can run them through a defrost time in the microwave. You can also add them to lunchboxes frozen and they will be perfect temperature at lunchtime.

Pancakes

Oh pancakes...we love pancakes! But they can take awhile to pull together and cook several batches worth. We generally have them for breakfast on the weekends, or sometimes for 'brinner' during the week. As our family has grown, I've learned that it's imperative to make at least a double batch while I have the griddle out on the counter. Because there's always a child who requests them in his lunchbox, or a little dude who asks for them for lunch at home. Or I get a craving for them, so...

It helps keeping the extra batch handy in the freezer, as I always feel like I'm pulling them out for a meal or snack.

Here's my trick for you: **save your bread bags.**

The right size pancakes will fit perfectly stacked in a bread bag. Let your cooked pancakes cool down on a cooling rack, but don't leave them out too long so they don't dry out a little. Once they are cooled, stack them up and slip them into a bread bag and freeze.

When you're ready to eat them, take out how many you need and thaw and reheat them in the toaster. Here's what I do with my toaster: drop them in and heat on 'level 1' to help them thaw. Then heat on 'level 2 or 3' so they warm through completely and are perfect and ready to be slathered in butter and syrup.

Every toaster will be different, but I've found a minute on level 1, followed by a longer toaster cycle will get them perfectly warm and ready to eat.

Waffles

Same story as pancakes, right? So delicious and worth making, but those waffle makers can take awhile to make each batch. Truth be told, when we have waffles for a meal, I generally end up standing and eating them while I tend to the other batches that are being cooked. I don't mind because I can enjoy another plateful later that week.

I also recommend freezing your cooled waffles in a bread bag. You can also use a plastic freezer baggie for them, but I think they are easier to get in and out of the bread bag!

Cinnamon Rolls

Cinnamon rolls are another fantastic treat that takes a little time and patience in the kitchen when making from scratch. Sometimes I wish I had 10 bread machines, so that I could make 10 batches at once. (I'm a lazy bread maker and rely too much on my bread machine...or stand mixer to prepare and knead the dough. I'll blame the arthritis in my hands, really!)

Anyways, cinnamon rolls can be easily frozen and I recommend freezing the dough before you bake them. Prepare the dough as directed, then assemble and roll up as directed and place into the pans (or disposable trays) as directed. After the second rise of the dough, cover the pans with foil and freeze. When you're ready to bake them, let them thaw partially or completely before baking. You might need to add a little extra baking time, depending on how thawed out they are when you put them in the oven. If you need to add more than 20 minutes to their bake time, I recommend covering loosely with foil while they are baking to keep them from browning on top.

You can also freeze cooked and frosted cinnamon rolls after they have cooled down. Microwave frozen cooked cinnamon rolls when ready to eat.

[Freezing Pizza Dough](#)

- Freezing pizza dough works best between the first and second rise.
- So if you are making the dough in your bread machine, that's really the first rise. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface. Add a little cornmeal to the flour if you want to give it that extra pizza flavor. Once rolled, form it into the shape that you want it. If freezing into a large rectangle or circle shaped baking sheet, then be sure that you have a freezer baggie that is large enough to hold it. If you don't, you could wrap it tightly with plastic wrap and/or foil once it has frozen.
- And if you are making the dough by hand, then place it on to the cookie sheet after rolling it out after the first rise.
- Place the dough in the freezer for at least 2 hours. Once frozen, transfer to a plastic freezer baggie.

Can you freeze the dough that has already been baked?!

- Absolutely! Bake the crust for 6-10 minutes, depending on the thickness and then set out to cool on a cooling rack. Once completely cool, add it to a large plastic freezer baggie, or wrap with plastic wrap and/or foil.

Freezing Yeast

When you make your own breads and doughs for pizza and cinnamon rolls, you go through quite a bit of yeast. It's cheaper to purchase a jar of yeast versus those 3-pack strips, but you don't want it to go bad before you use up the jar. I recommend storing the jar of yeast in the freezer to keep it active longer. There's nothing worse than going to proof yeast to make bread and it's not active anymore! (Ask me how I know!)

Store your yeast in the freezer to help it keep longer!

Meats & Casseroles

[Freezing Meatloaf](#)

- Simply line the pan with foil and then add your meatloaf.
- Fold the foil around the meatloaf.
- And pop it into the freezer!
- After the meatloaf has frozen, take it out of the pan and place the foil-wrapped meatloaf into a plastic freezer bag. (I prefer to double wrap with both foil and plastic bag to help with freezer burn.) When you are ready to cook it, simply place the foil back into the pan that you used to freeze it and then bake. If you want to thaw it first, place it into the fridge to thaw, at least 1 day ahead of time.
- To bake from frozen, add 1.5 to 2 times longer than the time suggested in the recipe. I have found that my meatloaves take about 1 hour, 45 minutes to cook from frozen (from a regular baking time of 1 hour).

Freezing Meatballs

I often find myself purchasing 5-6 lbs. of ground beef at once and I'll usually make a few batches of meatballs from the big pack. I prefer to freezer my meatballs raw and cook them with the sauce later, but you can also freeze them after they have been cooked through.

- Line a baking sheet with foil.
- Make the meatballs as directed in the recipe.
- Form into 1" balls and place on the baking sheet.
- Flash freeze for about an hour in the freezer.
- Take the partially frozen meatballs and add them to a plastic container or freezer baggie, in meal size portions.
- Flash freezing them will help them from sticking together in the baggie or container.

You can also freeze them in a pan to bake them together in the pan.

- Line a 9x9 or 7x11 inch baking dish with foil.
- Add the meatballs to the dish. I can usually fit 12 meatballs in a baking dish of this size.
- Pour any sauce over the meatballs, if directed.
- Wrap the foil around the meatballs and then slide the foil packet into a plastic freezer baggie.
- Let thaw before adding the meatballs back into the same baking dish.
- Bake as directed.

Cooked Meats

Need dinner on the table in a matter of minutes? It's totally possible if you have pre-cooked meats in the freezer. As you've already read, I like to have a good stock of cooked meats on hand to keep myself out of the drive through lane.

My favorite cooked meats to have on hand are:

- Taco meat
- Spaghetti sauce & Sloppy Joe sauce
- Cooked, shredded chicken – plain or mixed with BBQ or marinara sauce

Raw Meats

Sometimes I don't have time to prepare meats for the freezer when I get home from the grocery store. I try to build in enough time in my schedule to prepare things for the freezer right when I get home, but it often happens when I'm cooking that afternoon...or not at all.

When I don't have time to prepare meats for the freezer, I'll either drop the package as I purchased it into the freezer. The other thing that I recommend doing if you have just 5 minutes is to mix up a marinade for the meat and add the marinade to a baggie with the raw meat and freeze the meat in the marinade.

The meat will marinate as it thaws and will be perfectly delicious once cooked. Just be careful when thawing raw meat to keep it from warming up too much and spoiling!

Freezing Casseroles

Casseroles have a great reputation for being freezer friendly! They do really well in the freeze-thaw-reheat process and I highly recommend keeping a few in the freezer for when you need a quick meal for yourself, or a meal to deliver to a friend or family member in need.

I love freezing trays of enchiladas, pasta casseroles, as well as rice and veggie casseroles too. I recommend freezing them in a disposable tray, so that you don't end up with a freezer full of pyrex baking dishes and nothing left to cook with! I keep an eye out for the sales and specials for disposable trays and stock up when they are discounted. You can also find them at the dollar stores!

Let's move onto the recipes, shall we?!



Meats

How to Cook a Whole Chicken in the Slow Cooker → Shredded Chicken

Zucchini Meatballs

BBQ Meatballs

Enchilada Meatloaf

Italian Meatloaf

Hawaiian Meatloaf

Freezer Friendly Maple Dijon Salmon Marinade

Slow Cooker Cranberry Apple Pork Roast

Taco Meat

Taco Meat with Beans

[How to Cook a Whole Chicken in the Slow Cooker](#)

Ingredients

- 1 – 4 to 5 lb. whole chicken
- Seasonings, such as garlic powder, onion powder, salt, pepper, paprika
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed

Directions

- Drop the nekkid bird into the base of the slow cooker. No need to add any liquid...it will release plenty of juices and we will dilute them later for homemade broth!
- Season as you wish. I usually use garlic powder, onion powder, salt, pepper, paprika, whatever! Add some onions, garlic, carrots, celery...which will give the broth more flavor.
- Slow cook on low for 8 hours.
- Once cooked and cooled enough to touch, remove the chicken and veggies.
- Pull skin off, pull drumsticks off, pull meat off.
- Run your knife down the center breast bone and pull the breast and tenderloin off. Pull off as much meat as you can.
- Flip the bird and pull off the thighs and any meat from the back.
- Pile the meat you want to shred all up!
- Toss in the onions and garlic for added flavor. They are really soft and will almost 'melt' in with the chicken.
- Using 2 forks or your stand mixer, shred the chicken.
- Kaboom. You have shredded chicken to use in any of the recipes below. I can usually get 2 or 3 meals worth from 1 chicken, depending on the meal!

- **NOTE:** Save the broth by straining off meat and veggie pieces. Let cool before adding in 2 cup portions to plastic baggies. Freeze flat.

To Freeze: Let cool completely before adding in 2-3 cup portions of cooked, shredded chicken in a plastic freezer baggie or container.

To Thaw and Reheat: [Thaw cooked chicken in a bowl of warm water](#) before reheating or using in the recipe.

Zucchini Meatballs

Yield – 16 large meatballs

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 25-30 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb. ground beef
- 1 medium zucchini, shredded (about 1 1/4 cup)
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs (homemade or store bought)
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp salt and pepper
- About 1/2 cup spaghetti sauce, to top meatballs
- Pasta & Sauce
- Favorite veggie side, we had green beans!

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350.
- In a large mixing bowl, combine the ground beef, zucchini shreds, egg, breadcrumbs, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Form into large meatballs, mine were about 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter and I made 16 meatballs. Place into a glass baking dish (I used a smaller 7×11 glass dish, what you see above). Then top each meatball with a little pasta sauce.
- Bake the meatballs in the preheated oven for 25-30 minutes, or until cooked through. Cooking time will vary depending on size and thickness of the meatballs.
- Cook the pasta as directed.
- Prepare veggies.
- Serve Zucchini Meatballs over pasta and sauce with side of veggies.

To Freeze: Prepare meatballs as directed. Wrap raw meatballs in foil and then place in plastic freezer baggie. Freeze up to 6 months.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw completely before baking as directed.

BBQ Meatball Sliders

Yield – 8 servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 35 minutes

Ingredients

- 1.5 lbs. ground beef
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup Italian seasoned breadcrumbs
- Salt and pepper
- About 1 cup BBQ sauce
- 16 to 24 dinner rolls, or small buns
- 4 slices provolone, cheddar or Swiss cheese, cut into quarters
- Side dish, such as baby carrots, fresh fruit

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350.
- Make meatballs by mixing the ground beef with the egg, bread crumbs, and salt and pepper. Form into 1 to 1 1/2 inch balls and place into a glass baking dish. Drizzle the BBQ sauce over the meatballs. Bake in the preheated oven for 30 to 35 minutes, or until cooked through. (Cooking time may vary depending on size of the meatballs.)
- Once cooked, place single meatball onto dinner roll and top with quarter slice of cheese. (Heat in microwave if heat from the meatball doesn't melt the cheese.)
- Serve BBQ Meatball Sliders with favorite sides.

To Freeze: Prepare meatballs and drizzle BBQ sauce over the top. Wrap in foil and then place in plastic freezer baggie. Freeze up to 6 months.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw completely before baking as directed.

[Enchilada Meatloaf](#)

Yield – 2 – 9×5" loaf pans or 8 to 10 servings

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 60 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb. ground beef
- 15 oz. can refried beans (or 2 cups [homemade refried beans](#))
- 10 oz. can diced tomatoes and green chilies, well drained
- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp minced onion
- 2 Tbsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 1 cup bread crumbs (use gluten-free if needed!)
- 1 tsp salt and pepper each
- Fresh veggies as side dish

Directions

- Preheat oven to 375 F.
- Mix together all the ingredients in a bowl. Divide into each of the 2 – 9×5" loaf pans.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 55-60 minutes, or until meatloaf is cooked through in the center.
- Optional toppings: salsa & shredded cheese.

To Freeze Uncooked Meatloaf: line loaf pan with foil and add meatloaf mixture. Cover with foil and freeze in the loaf pan, then transfer to plastic freezer baggie once frozen.

To Freeze Cooked Meatloaf: After you've cooked the meatloaf, let it cool completely. Slice into meal size portions and freeze in smaller baggies or in a plastic container.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw completely before baking as directed.

Italian Meatloaf

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 20 minutes

Cooking Time – 60 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 ½ lbs. ground beef
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup spaghetti sauce, divided
- 1 cup plain bread crumbs
- 1 Tbsp Italian seasoning
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- Serve with mashed potatoes (milk, butter, seasonings etc.)
- Frozen vegetables, as side dish

Directions

- Preheat oven to 375 F.
- In a large mixing bowl, combine the ground beef, eggs, ½ cup of spaghetti sauce, bread crumbs, Italian seasoning, and salt and pepper.
- Add remaining spaghetti sauce over top of the meatloaf.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes, or until cooked through. (Cooking time may vary depending on thickness of the meatloaf.)
- Prepare the mashed potatoes and veggies.
- Let meatloaf cool slightly before slicing and serving.
- Serve Italian Meatloaf with mashed potatoes with veggies.

To Freeze: Prepare the meat mixture as instructed above. Line a 9×5 inch loaf pan with foil and add the raw meat mixture into the pan. Add about ½ cup of spaghetti sauce over top of the meatloaf. Wrap the foil around the loaf pan and slip into a labeled plastic freezer baggie and freeze up to 6 months in fridge freezer or 12 months in a deep freezer.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw completely in the baggie in the refrigerator overnight. Place the foil packet back into the same loaf pan. You can bake the meatloaf in the foil, but fold the foil back so that it bakes ‘uncovered.’

Hawaiian Meatloaf

Yield – 8 servings (this is a doubled recipe)

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 1 hour 15 minutes (loaf pan) or 30-35 minutes (muffin tins)

Note: Recipe written below is for “double portion” – half to eat, half to freeze.

Ingredients

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- 2 eggs
- 1 – 20 oz. can crushed pineapple, drained well (reserve the juice)
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- Sauce: 1/2 cup pineapple juice, 2/3 cup ketchup, 2/3 cup brown sugar
- Side dishes suggestions: green beans or corn, or fries or mashed potatoes, or baked beans

Directions

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
- In a large mixing bowl, combine the ground beef, eggs, drained crushed pineapple, breadcrumbs, salt and pepper.
- Add half of the mixture to a 9×5 loaf pan, and the other half divided into 12 muffin tins. (Or put the other half into another 9×5 loaf pan.)
- Bake in the preheated oven for 1 hour (for loaf pan) or 20 minutes (for muffin tins).
- Meanwhile, whisk together 1/2 cup of the reserved pineapple juice with the ketchup and brown sugar. For loaf pan: after 1 hour of cooking, pour the sauce over the top of the meatloaf and bake for another 10-15 minutes. For muffin tins: after 20 minutes, pour the sauce over the top of each cup and bake for another 10-15 minutes or until cooked.
- Prepare preferred side dishes.
- Serve Hawaiian Meatloaf with sides.

To Freeze Cooked: Let come to room temperature, slice into meal size slices, and then place into plastic freezer baggie and place flat into the freezer. Reheat in the microwave.

To Freeze Uncooked Meatloaf: line loaf pan with foil and add meatloaf mixture. Cover with foil and freeze in the loaf pan, then transfer to plastic freezer baggie once frozen.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw completely in the baggie in the refrigerator overnight. Place the foil packet back into the same loaf pan. You can bake the meatloaf in the foil, but fold the foil back so that it bakes 'uncovered.'

Freezer Friendly Maple Dijon Salmon Marinade

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb. salmon, cut into 1/4 lb. steaks
- Salt and pepper
- 4 Tbsp maple syrup
- 4 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- Suggested sides: rice or bread, salad or veggies

Directions

- To Freeze: add the salmon to a plastic freezer baggie or container. Sprinkle a little salt and pepper over the top of the steaks.
- In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the maple syrup and the Dijon mustard. Pour over the salmon in the baggie or container. Seal and freeze.
- Thaw in the refrigerator overnight and then grill or bake until salmon is cooked through.
- Serve with side of rice or bread and salad or veggies.

Cranberry-Apple Orange Pork Roast

Yield – 4 servings x 2

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 8 hours in slow cooker

Note: Recipe written below is for “double portion” – half to eat, half to freeze.

Ingredients

- 1 large pork tenderloin, cut in half (about 2.5 lbs.)
- Salt and pepper
- 2 – 15 oz. cans whole cranberry sauce
- 3 medium apples, cored and diced
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions

- Place half of the pork loin in the base of the slow cooker and the other half in a labeled plastic freezer baggie. Sprinkle both with salt and pepper.
- In mixing bowl, stir together the cranberry sauce, diced apples, orange juice and spices. Pour half over the pork in the slow cooker and the other half into the freezer baggie.
- Set the slow cooker to low and cook for 8 hours. Serve with side of bread or rice.

To Freeze: Freeze half of the pork loin in a labeled plastic freezer baggie, up to 6 months.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in the fridge overnight and cook as directed. If partially frozen when you start the slow cooker, that’s OK, but you might want to add an hour or two to the cooking time.

Taco Meat

Yield – 12 servings (3 meals worth)

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 20-25 minutes

Ingredients

- 3 lb. ground beef
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 6 oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- 2 Tbsp ground cumin
- 2 Tbsp garlic powder
- Salt and Pepper, to taste
- 4 oz. can green chilies (optional)

Directions

- Brown the ground chuck with the chopped onion. Drain and rinse. Return to sauce pan.
- Add the tomato sauce and spices to the ground beef and let simmer over low heat for 10 minutes.
- Divide meat into meal size portions into freezer containers. Label & freeze.

To Freeze: Let the taco meat cool completely, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Taco Meat with Beans

Yield – 6 meals worth

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 20-25 minutes

Ingredients

- 3 lb. ground beef
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 6 oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- 2 Tbsp ground cumin
- 2 Tbsp garlic powder
- Salt and Pepper, to taste
- 3 - 15 oz. cans black or pinto beans, or 6 cups cooked black or pinto beans
- 4 oz. can green chilies (optional)

Directions

- Brown the ground chuck with the chopped onion. Drain and rinse. Return to sauce pan.
- Add the tomato sauce and spices to the ground beef and let simmer over low heat for 10 minutes.
- Divide meat into 6 meal size portions into freezer containers.
- Label & freeze.

To Freeze: Let the taco meat cool completely, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.



Stews, Soups, Chili & Sauces

Beef & Butternut Squash Stew

Moroccan Beef Stew

Butternut, Apple, Pear Soup

Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup

Italian Wedding Soup

Butternut Squash Chili

Chicken Enchilada Chili

Chili with Cornbread Waffles

Chuckwagon Chili

Corn & Chicken Chili

Heat n Sweet Chili

Pumpkin Chili

Sausage Chili

Slow Cooker Chili with Skillet Cornbread

Spicy 15 Bean Chili

Southern Chili with Homemade Bread Bowls

White Chicken Chili Stuffed Potatoes

Chunky Spaghetti Sauce

Sloppy Joe Sauce

Veggie Alfredo Sauce

[Beef & Butternut Squash Stew](#)

Yield – 4 to 6 servings

Prep Time – 15 minutes

Cook Time – 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 3/4 lb. stew beef, seasoned with salt and pepper and minced onion
- 1 butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cubed
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 4 oz. can sliced mushrooms
- 1 15 oz. can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1/2 lb. baby carrots or equivalent carrot sticks
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- Add the olive oil to the Dutch oven and brown all sides of the stew beef. Once browned, add 6 cups of water or beef broth. (Add 1-2 more cups if you wish for it to simmer longer.)
- Then add the prepared butternut squash, onion, mushrooms, diced tomatoes, carrots and the seasonings. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and let simmer for 25 minutes, or until squash is fork tender.
- Cover and let simmer until ready to serve.
- Serve Dutch Oven Beef Stew with Butternut Squash in [warmed soup bowls](#) .

To Freeze: Make a double batch, let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Moroccan Beef Stew

Yield – 5 servings

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 40 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb. stew beef (or chuck roast cut into bite size cubes)
- 1 small onion, diced
- 6 small carrot sticks, peeled and cut into chunks
- 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 15 oz. can chick peas
- 1 cup golden raisins
- 1 cup kalamata olives
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- Salt and pepper
- 10 oz. box couscous

Directions

- Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan. Brown the beef and then add the onion, carrots, diced tomatoes, chickpeas (drained), raisins, olives, broth, cumin and cinnamon. Bring to bubbling and let cook for about 20 minutes, or until beef pieces are cooked through and carrots are soft. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Prepare the couscous as directed on the box.
- Serve Moroccan Beef Stew over couscous.

To Freeze: Make a double batch, let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Butternut, Apple, Pear Soup

Yield – 8 servings

Preparation Time – 30 minutes

Cooking Time – 1 hour minutes

Ingredients

- 1 medium butternut squash
- about 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 large apple, cored and sliced
- 1 Anjou pear, cored and sliced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups whole milk or cream
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp ground sage
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- about 1 tsp ground nutmeg, to taste

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 400.
- Cut off the top stem of the squash. Then cut lengthwise in half and place in a glass baking dish, facing down. Add about 1/4" of water to the baking dish. Cover with foil. Bake in the preheated oven for 45 minutes, or until completely soft. Check to make sure the squash is tender in the thickest portion by poking with a fork. Cooking time may vary depending on thickness of the squash.
- Meanwhile, add the olive oil to a large saucepan and saute the apples, pear and onion for about 5 minutes. Then pour in the chicken broth and milk/cream and bring to bubbling. Add the seasonings and spices. Reduce heat to low and keep simmering until squash is ready. (If longer than 10 minutes, cover tightly while it simmers so too much water doesn't boil off.)
- When the squash is cooked through, carefully flip it over (you will need an oven mitt!) and scoop out the seeds. Then scoop the soft flesh out and add to the bubbling soup.
- Transfer to a blender and puree.
- Serve with a nutmeg garnish. Season to taste.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

[Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup](#)

Yield – 8 servings, or 2 meals worth

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 8 hours in slow cooker

Ingredients

- 1 lb. chicken breast
- 1 lb. chicken thighs
- 2 15 oz. cans tomato sauce
- about 1/4 cup [homemade taco seasoning](#)
- 4 cups frozen corn
- 2 red peppers, seeded and diced
- 2 quarts chicken stock
- 8 to 12 corn tortillas, cut into strips
- Couple pinchfuls of shredded cheese for garnish

Directions

- Add all the ingredients, except the tortillas and cheese, to the slow cooker, and cook on low for 8 hours. Gently shred the chicken pieces once cooked.
- Before serving, add the tortilla strips and a pinchful of cheese to each bowl.

To Freeze: Do not add the tortillas and the cheese to what you freeze. Let the main soup cool completely before adding to container or plastic freezer baggie.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in a bowl of warm water and reheat in a saucepan. Add tortillas strips and cheese to each bowl before serving.

[Italian Wedding Soup](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 20 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground chicken
- 2 slices bread (made into breadcrumbs, about 1 cup)
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 cups homemade chicken stock ([See How to Cook a Whole Chicken](#))
- 3 - 4 cups water (depending on how soupy you like it)
- 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 10 oz. box frozen spinach
- About 1 cup pasta noodles
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- In a mixing bowl, combine the ground chicken, bread crumbs, eggs and Italian seasoning into 3/4 inch diameter meatballs.
- In a large saucepan or Dutch oven, add the olive oil and brown the meatballs on all sides. Add the 2 cups of homemade chicken stock and 3 cups of water. Feel free to add water as needed.
- Stir in the diced tomatoes, and frozen spinach. Bring to a rolling boil. If you plan to let it simmer, reduce heat to low.
- Add the pasta noodles about 12-14 minutes before you'd like to serve the soup. Do not let them overcook, or you'll end up with Mushy Italian Wedding Soup!
- Serve as is, or with a slice of bread or side salad.

To Freeze: Prepare the meatballs and soup as directed. Let cool completely before freezing in large plastic freezer baggie or container.

To Thaw and Reheat: Add to a bowl of warm water or thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Warm up in a saucepan.

Butternut Squash Chili

Yield – 8 servings

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 40 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb. ground beef
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 small butternut squash, diced
- 1 lb. baby carrots, halved
- 2 - 15 oz. cans diced tomatoes
- 15 oz. can black beans (red or pinto beans would be great too!)
- 3 Tbsp chili powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Homemade or store bought bread/rolls

Directions

- In a large saucepan or Dutch oven, brown the ground beef with the diced onion. Once browned, drain and then return to the pot. Add the squash, baby carrots, diced tomatoes with juices, black beans with juices and about 4 cups of water. (Add more or less depending on how soup-y you want it!) Stir in the chili powder and garlic powder.
- Bring to a bubbling boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 20-30 more minutes, or until the squash cubes are soft. (Cooking time will vary depending on thickness of the squash cubes.)
- Season with salt and pepper. And some crushed pepper, if you want some extra heat!
- Prepare bread.
- Serve Butternut Squash Chili with side of bread.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Chicken Enchilada Chili

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 20 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 cup homemade or store bought beef broth
- 6 oz. can tomato paste
- 3 Tbsp [homemade taco seasoning](#)
- 1 Tbsp chili powder
- 15 oz. can red beans, drained
- 2 cups [cooked black beans, from the freezer](#)
- 15 oz. can diced tomatoes with green chilies
- 2 cups [cooked and shredded chicken](#)
- 4 corn cobs or other side dish

Directions

- In a large saucepan or Dutch oven, whisk together the beef broth and the tomato paste, plus about 1 cans worth of water. Stir in the [homemade taco seasoning](#) and chili powder. Add the red beans, [black beans](#) and canned tomatoes with green chilies. Stir through and let simmer for 10 minutes.
- Stir in the [cooked and shredded chicken](#). Let simmer a little longer. If longer than 15 more minutes, cover to prevent too much liquid from escaping.
- Shuck the corn cobs and boil them for 4-6 minutes. Serve as is, or with butter and favorite spices/seasonings.
- Serve Chicken Enchilada Chili with Corn Cobs.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Chili with Cornbread Waffles

Yield – 6 waffles, 8 servings of chili

Preparation Time – 20 minutes

Cooking Time – 8 hours in slow cooker for chili, about 30 minutes for the waffles

Ingredients

Chili

- 1 bag Hurst Slow Cooker Chili Beans and seasoning
- 1 lb cooked ground beef
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 small pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1 6 oz. can tomato paste
- Salt and pepper to taste

Cornbread Waffles

- 1/3 cup oil
- 6 eggs
- 1 cup milk plus 2 Tbsp
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cup flour
- 1 1/4 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- Big pinch salt

Directions

- Add all the chili ingredients to 5 qt or larger slow cooker, along with 7 cups of water. Stir together. Set the slow cooker on low and cook for 8 hours.
- Before dinner, prepare the cornbread waffles by whisking all the waffle ingredients in a mixing bowl. Batter should be thick, but still flow easily off the whisk. Cook the waffles according to manufacturer directions. Makes 6 waffles.
- Plate the waffles and then top with chili and cheese and any other favorite toppings ~ sour cream, sliced green onions.
- Serve Chili with Cornbread Waffles.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag. Freeze cooled waffles in bread bag or plastic freezer baggie.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan. Reheat waffles in the toaster oven.

[Chuckwagon Chili](#)

Yield – 4 servings plus leftovers

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 30 minutes (plus time to soak and cook dried beans)

Ingredients

- 1 cup dried red kidney beans
- 1.5 lb. ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1 6 oz. can tomato paste
- 1 Tbsp garlic powder
- 3 Tbsp chili powder
- 2 tsp salt
- Pepper, to taste
- 2 cups uncooked pasta “wheels”
- Shredded cheese

Directions

- [Soak and cook dried beans](#) in large pot. Drain and rinse the beans.
- In the same pot that you cooked the beans, brown the ground beef with the chopped onion. Drain and rinse. Return to pot.
- In small saucepan, cook 2 cups uncooked pasta wheels as directed on package.
- Combine the ground beef/onions, cooked red beans, diced tomatoes (undrained), tomato paste PLUS 4 cans of water, garlic powder, chili powder, salt and pepper.
- Cook over medium heat for 10-15 minutes, allowing time for flavors to mingle.
- Serve Chuckwagon Chili with pinchul of shredded cheese in each bowl.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Corn & Chicken Chili

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped, or about 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups shredded chicken
- 3-4 cups frozen whole corn kernels, or 2 15 oz. cans corn
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Sour cream and cilantro, for garnish
- Bread and butter.

Directions

- In a large Dutch oven or saucepan, heat the olive oil and sauté the onions and garlic for 2-3 minutes. Add the diced tomatoes, 2 cups chicken broth PLUS 3-4 CUPS HOT WATER (depending on how thin/thick you want the chili). Stir in the shredded chicken and the corn.
- Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add a dollop of sour cream and some chopped cilantro (optional) to each serving bowl.
- Prepare bread and butter.
- Serve Corn Chicken Chili with bread and butter.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Heat 'n Sweet Chili

Yield – 8 servings (2 meals worth)

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 lb. ground beef or chuck
- 3 – 15 oz. cans of beans – red kidney and/or black beans
- 2 – 15 oz. cans diced tomatoes
- 10 oz. can diced tomatoes and green chilies
- 1 small red onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- About 3 Tbsp chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional – top with sour cream, shredded cheese, sliced green onions

Directions

- Brown the ground beef, drain and return to a large saucepan or Dutch oven.
- Add the undrained beans, the undrained diced tomatoes, undrained diced tomatoes with green chilies, chopped onion and crushed garlic. Stir to combine and bring to a slow simmer (slowly popping bubbles) over medium heat. Stir in the maple syrup, chili powder and salt and pepper, to taste. Let simmer 15-20 minutes. If you plan to simmer it longer than this, cover it so that it doesn't lose too much moisture!
- Serve Heat 'n Sweet Chili.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Pumpkin Chili

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes

Ingredients

- About 1.3 lb. ground beef
- 1 small red onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 15 oz. can diced tomatoes with jalapenos
- 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 15 oz. canned pure pumpkin
- 1 cup homemade or store bought beef broth
- 3 cups cooked red kidney beans
- 1 1/2 Tbsp chili powder
- Couple dashes cinnamon
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- Brown the ground beef with the red onion and garlic in a large saucepan. Drain and return to pan.
- Add both cans of diced tomatoes, the pumpkin, beef broth and beans and stir through.
- Stir in the chili powder and cinnamon. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Let simmer over low heat for 45 minutes to an hour.
- Reheat or cook carrots or other veggie.
- Serve Chili with Pumpkin and Cinnamon.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

Sausage Chili

Yield – 8 servings (2 meals worth)

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 45 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 lb. breakfast sausage
- 15 oz. can ranch style beans
- 10 oz. can diced tomatoes with green chilies
- 6 oz. can tomato paste
- 16 oz. can tomato sauce
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- 1 Tbsp ground cumin
- 1 Tbsp paprika
- ½ Tbsp garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp salt
- ½ cup water

Directions

- In a skillet, brown the ground beef and breakfast sausage.
- After hamburger meat and breakfast sausage are fully cooked, drain if necessary, then mix in the remaining ingredients.
- Bring to a boil over medium heat and reduce to low and simmer for at least 20 minutes, allowing flavors to mingle.
- Serve Sausage Chili, warm from the pot.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

[Slow Cooker Chili with Skillet Cornbread](#)

Yield – 8 servings of chili & cornbread

Preparation Time – 5 minutes for the chili, about 10 for the cornbread

Cooking Time – 8 hours for the slow cooker, 15-20 minutes*

*Note: I used a 12" skillet, so it didn't take as long to cook my cornbread.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. bag Hurst Slow Cooker Chili Beans and seasoning
- 1 lb. cooked ground beef
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 small pepper, seeded and chopped
- 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 6 oz. can tomato paste
- Salt and pepper to taste

[Skillet Cornbread recipe](#)

click to see above recipe

Directions

- Add all the ingredients to 5 qt. or larger slow cooker, along with 7 cups of water. Stir together. Set the slow cooker on low and cook for 8 hours.
- Prepare the [skillet cornbread](#). Adjust cooking time if using a different sized skillet.
- Serve Slow Cooker Chili with side of cornbread.

To Freeze Chili: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat Chili: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

To Freeze Cornbread: Let cool before slicing and added slices into plastic freezer baggie.

To Thaw and Reheat Cornbread: Remove them from the freezer and let them come to room temperature on the counter top. Reheat them in a 300 degree oven for 10 minutes after they have thawed completely on the counter

Spicy 15 Bean Chili

Yield – at least 8 servings

Preparation Time – 15 minutes plus 2 hours bean soaking time

Cooking Time – 1 hour, cook beans; 30 minutes, cook chili

Ingredients

- 1 lb. bag 15 bean soup, chili flavor
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 jalapeno, chopped
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 28 oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- Soak the beans in large bowl with water overnight. Or in a bowl with hot water for at least 2 hours.
- Cook the beans as directed in a large pot for about an hour with the chili flavoring. Drain once beans are tender, saving 3 cups of the liquid the beans cooked in. (I just didn't drain it completely, leaving some of the liquid in the pan to then pour in with the cooked beef.)
- In a large pot or Dutch oven, add the chopped onion, chopped jalapeno and ground beef. Brown the beef and drain if necessary.
- Return to the pan and add the cooked beans plus reserved liquid, the crushed tomatoes and the spices. Let simmer for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Serve Spicy 15 Bean Chili with side of favorite veggies.

To Freeze: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

[Spicy Southern Chili in Homemade Bread Bowls](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes, 2 hours for bread prep

Ingredients

Bread Bowl Dough

- 1 cup lukewarm water
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 3 cups all-purpose or bread flour
- 1 packet active dry yeast
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp chili powder

Chili

- 1 1/2 lb. ground chuck
- 1/2 red onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 15 oz. can Hunts stewed tomatoes
- 10 oz. can diced tomatoes with green chilies
- About 2 1/2 cups cooked pinto beans
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional Toppings: shredded cheese, sour cream, scallions

Directions

- Place the ingredients in the order listed into the bread machine and run the dough cycle. When finished, lightly knead the dough on a clean and floured surface. Divide the dough into 6 equal parts and form into the shape of a ball. Let rise for about 30 minutes in a warm place. Bake at 350 for 15-20 minutes. Let cool slightly before cutting the tops out with a bread knife.
- In a large saucepan, brown the ground beef with the red onion and garlic. Drain and return to the pan. Add the stewed tomatoes, diced tomatoes with green chilies, pinto beans and chili powder. Let simmer for 20-30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Serve Spicy Southern Chili in Bread Bowls.

To Freeze Chili: Let cool in fridge, and then place in a freezer friendly plastic container or bag.

To Thaw and Reheat Chili: Thaw in fridge or bowl of warm water. Warm up in a saucepan.

To Freeze Bread Bowls: Let the bread cool to room temperature and then freeze them in a plastic freezer baggie. Don't squish them into the baggie, as you'll want them to be full shape after they thaw.

To Thaw and Reheat Bread Bowls: Remove them from the freezer and let them come to room temperature on the counter top. Reheat them in a 300 degree oven for 10 minutes after they have thawed completely on the counter.

[Erin's Chunky Spaghetti Sauce](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 20 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 Tbsp minced onion
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 15 ounce cans diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp sweetener
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pinches of fresh herbs (garden)
- Shredded or grated parmesan, couple of pinches

Directions

- In a large skillet or sauté pan, brown the ground beef with the minced onion and garlic. Drain and return to skillet.
- Add the diced tomatoes, Italian seasoning, sweetener, salt and pepper. Bring to bubbling, then reduce heat to low and cook for 8-10 minutes.
- Garnish with [fresh chopped herbs](#) and parmesan cheese.
- Serve my Chunky Spaghetti Sauce over noodles with side salad or spinach. Or corn. Or whatever.

To Freeze: Let the sauce cool completely before spooning into a plastic freezer baggie. Freeze flat, removing as much air as possible.

To Thaw and Reheat: Place in a bowl or shallow dish filled with warm water and quick thaw the sauce. Reheat over low heat in a skillet.

[Homemade Sloppy Joe Mix](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 10 minutes to bubble with cooked meat

Ingredients

- 3 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp minced onion
- 1 Tbsp smoked paprika (regular paprika works too!)
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 15 oz. can tomato sauce, plus 1/2 cans worth of water
- 1 Tbsp mustard
- 2 1/2 Tbsp cider vinegar (regular distilled vinegar works too!)

Directions

- In a small bowl, combine the brown sugar, minced onion, ground cumin, smoked paprika, garlic powder, salt and pepper.
- Brown the ground beef, then stir in the tomato sauce plus about 1/2 cans worth of water (more if you plan on simmering it a long time), the mustard and cider vinegar. Add in the spices mixture and stir into the sauce. Let simmer for 5-10 minutes, giving time for the flavors and spices to infuse into the sauce.
- Serve Sloppy Joes on buns (or over rice) with favorite side dishes.

To Freeze: Let the sauce cool completely before spooning into a plastic freezer baggie. Freeze flat, removing as much air as possible.

To Thaw and Reheat: Place in a bowl or shallow dish filled with warm water and quick thaw the sauce. Reheat over low heat in a skillet.

[Freezer Friendly Vegetable Alfredo Sauce](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 20 minutes

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup flour
- 3 cups whole milk (or half and half/heavy cream)
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 16 oz. frozen stir-fry veggie mix
- 1 lb. pasta noodles

Directions

- In a large skillet, melt the butter. Whisk in the flour and then quickly whisk in the milk, making sure that the flour doesn't clump in the milk. Bring to bubbling over medium high heat and let the sauce thicken.
- Cook the frozen veggies as directed and drain well. You don't want any extra water in the veggies thinning out the sauce.
- Once thickened, stir in the Parmesan cheese, shredded mozzarella cheese, garlic powder and salt and pepper to taste. Mix in the prepared veggies.
- Prepare pasta as directed.
- Serve Veggie Alfredo Sauce over pasta.

To Freeze: Completely cool the sauce with veggies in the refrigerator and spoon into a plastic freezer baggie. Remove as much air from the baggie as you can and then [flat freeze](#) to save space.

To Thaw: Place the baggie in a bowl of warm water to [quickly thaw it](#). Or let thaw in the refrigerator overnight.

To Reheat: Add thawed or partially frozen sauce to a skillet and reheat for 10-15 minutes over medium low heat, stirring often.



Casseroles & Enchiladas

Chicken & Spinach Enchiladas

Southwest Mac & Cheese

Butternut Rice Pilaf

Sweet Potato & Black Bean Enchiladas

Stovetop Ratatouille

Shepherd's Tater Tot Pie

Bean and Cheese Casserole

Chicken and Spinach Enchiladas

Yield – 2 9×13 pans, or 14 to 16 servings

Preparation Time – 20 minutes

Cooking Time – 30 to 40 minutes

Ingredients

- 3 cups cooked, shredded chicken
- 16 oz. container sour cream
- 2 10 oz. boxes frozen spinach, cooked and well drained
- 4 cups shredded pepper jack cheese, divided
- 2 Tbsp minced onion
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- Salt and pepper
- 18 to 20 soft taco size flour tortillas
- 2 10 oz. cans green chile enchilada sauce

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350. Lightly grease 2 9×13 glass baking sheets with non-stick cooking spray.
- In a large mixing bowl, mix together the shredded chicken, sour cream, spinach, 1 cup of the pepper jack cheese, minced onion and garlic, cumin and some salt and pepper.
- Spoon the mixture into each of the tortillas. Roll, and place the tortillas seam side down in the baking dish. (I can generally fit 8 to 10 enchiladas in a pan, depending on how full they are and how tight they are rolled.) Fill both pans.
- Then pour 1 can of the green enchilada sauce over the top of 1 pan, and repeat with the other can. Sprinkle the remaining 3 cups of pepper jack cheese over the 2 pans.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 30 minutes, or until cheese is melted and begins to golden, and sauce is bubbling.

To Freeze: Bake as directed and then let cool before freezing in the container you baked it in. If you plan ahead, you can prepare these enchiladas in a disposable tray.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Bake as directed, adding 15-20 minutes to the bake time if only partially thawed.

Southwest Macaroni and Cheese

Yield – 4 to 6 servings

Preparation Time – 25 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minute

Ingredients

- 1 lb. elbow macaroni noodles
- 8 oz. sour cream
- 10 oz. diced tomatoes with green chilies
- 2 cups cooked black beans, or 15 oz. can black beans
- 15 oz. can corn
- 2 cups Mexican blend cheese, or Pepper Jack cheese blend, divided

Directions

- Cook the pasta noodles as directed. Drain.
- In the same pot, stir together the sour cream, diced tomatoes and chilies, black beans, corn. Add the noodles back to the mixture and stir in about 1 1/2 cups of the shredded cheese.
- Use the remaining cheese to top off each serving. Serve warm.

To Freeze: Prepare as directed and then let cool before freezing in the container you baked it in. If you plan ahead, you can prepare this pasta in a disposable tray.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Bake at 350 for 20 minutes, or until warmed through and cheese is bubbly on top.

[Butternut Cranberry Rice Pilaf](#)

Yield – 4 to 6 servings

Preparation Time – 25 minutes

Cooking Time – 1 hour

Ingredients

- 1 small butternut squash
- 2 sweet potatoes
- 1 cup brown rice
- 1/2 cup wild rice
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- Tangy vinaigrette dressing
- 1 small red onion, chopped

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400 F. Add 1/4 inch of water to a 9×13 inch glass baking dish.
- Slice the top off the butternut squash, then cut it in half, lengthwise. Place the 2 pieces, flesh side up in the baking dish. Roast for 1 hour, or until flesh is soft all the way through. Cut into bite size pieces.
- Cook the rice, as directed. I mixed the brown rice and wild rice together in my [rice cooker](#) with 3 1/4 cups of water.
- Cook the 2 sweet potatoes (with a slit) in the microwave for 5-6 minutes, or until soft. Cut them up into small bite size squares.
- Once everything is cooked and cubed, combine the rice, butternut squash cubes, sweet potato cubes, and cranberries in a large mixing bowl. Add in the cinnamon and ground ginger. Then add dressing, to taste.
- Serve Butternut Cranberry Rice Pilaf with red onion garnish.

To Freeze: Before adding the red onions, add the cooled rice pilaf into a plastic container or freezer baggie.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Add to a saucepan with about 3/4 cups of water and cook over medium low heat, tossing often until heated. Garnish with chopped red onions.

[Sweet Potato Black Bean Enchiladas](#)

Yield – 6 to 8 servings, 1 9×13 pan

Preparation Time – 20 minutes

Cooking Time – 60 minutes sweet potatoes, 25 minutes enchiladas

Ingredients

- 2 medium sweet potatoes
- 1 can black beans or 2 cups [cooked black beans](#)
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 12 corn tortillas
- 1 can red enchilada sauce, or 1 1/2 cups homemade enchilada sauce
- 2 cups shredded quesadilla cheese, Mexican blend cheese or Pepper Jack cheese
- Side of veggies or fruit

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350.
- [Steam-bake the sweet potatoes](#) for an hour. Let cool before peeling and cutting. Cut them into bite size chunks and add them to a mixing bowl.
- To the sweet potatoes, add the drained and rinsed black beans and salsa. Gently combine.
- Spoon the sweet potato mixture into the corn tortillas, roll and place seam side down in the baking dish. Repeat for all the tortillas. Pour the red enchilada sauce over the top and then add the shredded cheese over the sauce.
- Bake at 350 for 25 minutes, or until cheese has melted and sauce is bubbly.
- Let cool slightly before serving.
- Prepare veggie or fruit as side.
- Serve Sweet Potato Black Bean Enchiladas with veggie or fruit.

To Freeze: Bake as directed and then let cool before freezing in the container you baked it in. If you plan ahead, you can prepare these enchiladas in a disposable tray.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Bake as directed, adding 15-20 minutes to the bake time if only partially thawed.

[Freezer Friendly Stovetop Ratatouille](#)

Adapted from [Not Your Mother's Make-Ahead and Freeze Cookbook](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – *35 minutes

Cooking Time – 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 small red onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 small zucchini, sliced into 1/4 inch half moons
- 1 eggplant, cubed
- 15 oz. can diced tomatoes with their juices
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 3 stalks fresh thyme leaves
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Mozzarella cheese shreds, optional garnish
- Loaf bread (or rice if Gluten Free)

Directions

- *Add the cubed eggplant to a colander and sprinkle with about 2 tsp salt. Let sit for about 25-30 minutes. Rinse well before using in this recipe.
- Add the olive oil to large saucepan and sauté the onion and garlic for 3-5 minutes. Add the bell peppers, zucchini, eggplant, diced tomatoes, basil, oregano and thyme leaves. Cook over medium heat for 25 minutes, stirring often. Vegetables will soften and form until a delicious ratatouille. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Serve Stovetop Ratatouille with optional mozzarella cheese garnish, and loaf bread (or rice if Gluten Free).

To Freeze: Don't overcook the vegetables. Let cool completely in the refrigerator before freezing in meal-size portions in plastic baggies or containers.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Add to a saucepan and simmer on low for 10-15 minutes, or until heated through.

Tater Tot Shepherd's Pie

Yield – 4 to 6 servings, 9×13 inch baking dish

Preparation Time – 25 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 Tbsp minced onion
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- BBQ sauce or ketchup
- 3 cups frozen mixed veggies, cooked and drained
- 18 oz. bag tater tots (or larger)
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400.
- Brown the ground beef with the minced onion and garlic powder. Drain.
- Add the browned ground beef to the bottom of a 9×13 -inch baking dish. Add several lines of BBQ sauce or ketchup over the ground beef. Add the mixed veggies over the top and then spread the tater tots on top. Lastly, add the shredded cheddar cheese over the tater tots.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 25 minutes, or until tater tots are warmed and cheese has melted.
- Serve Tater Tot Shepherd's Pie.

To Freeze: Prepare the casserole as directed. After you sprinkle the cheese on top, you can cover the disposable baking tray or casserole dish with foil and freeze.

To Reheat: let thaw and bake as directed. If cooking from partially thawed or frozen, bake twice as long...half of the time covered with the foil and the other of half of the time uncovered.



Breads

Sausage Breakfast Muffins

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins

Pumpkin Muffins with Cinnamon-Pecan Streusel

Freezer Friendly Blueberry Oatmeal Pancakes

Pancakes with Peach Syrup

Carrot Cake Pancakes With Cream Cheese Syrup

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Waffles

Whole Wheat Pizza Crust

Key Lime Bread

Overnight Slow Cooker Baked Oatmeal

 Peaches & Cream Baked Oatmeal

 Pumpkin Spice Baked Oatmeal

Baked Oatmeal with Scrambled Eggs

Strawberry Rhubarb Baked Oatmeal

 Triple Berry Baked Oatmeal

Freezer Friendly Cinnamon Rolls

[Freezer Friendly Sweet & Savory Sausage Breakfast Muffins](#)

Yield – 18 muffins

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp ground sage
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 4 eggs
- 1 1/4 cup milk
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 lb. cooked all-natural sausage

Directions

- Grease 18 muffin tins and preheat oven to 375.
- In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, sugar, salt and sage. Add the oil and the eggs, then pour in the milk and whisk together.
- Stir in the diced red bell pepper and cooked sausage and .
- Fill the greased muffin tins 2/3 full with batter.
- Bake muffins in the preheated oven for 20-24 minutes, or until cooked through.
- Let cool on cooling rack before serving.

To Freeze: Let cool completely before adding to a plastic freezer baggie or container.

To Thaw and Reheat: Let sit on the counter for a bit, or reheat in the microwave on the defrost setting.

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins

Yield – 12 servings

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 20-25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup applesauce
- 1 1/2 cup flour
- 3/4 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 t pumpkin pie spice
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup oil
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup water
- 3/4 cup canned pumpkin (1/2 of 15 oz. can)
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400.
- Grease 12 medium muffin tins, or 6 jumbo muffin tins.
- Mix all ingredients with hand mixer or in stand mixer.
- Bake for 20-25 minutes (a little longer for the jumbo muffins!)

To Freeze: Let cool completely before adding to a plastic freezer baggie or container.

To Thaw and Reheat: Let sit on the counter for a bit, or reheat in the microwave on the defrost setting.

Pumpkin Muffins with Cinnamon-Pecan Streusel

Yield – 18 muffins

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 20-25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup pumpkin puree

Cinnamon-Pecan Streusel

- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 4 Tbsp butter
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350. Grease 18 wells of regular size muffin tin.
- In a stand mixer or mixing bowl, combine together the butter or margarine and sugar until smooth.
- In a mixing bowl, toss together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and salt.
- Add the eggs, 1 at a time, to the butter and sugar mixture. Stir after adding each egg and scrape down the sides if using a stand mixer.
- Next, stir in about half of the flour mixture, until smooth. Then add half of the milk and stir until smooth. Then repeat with the other half of the flour and milk. Finally mix in the vanilla and pumpkin puree. Let mix for 1-2 minutes, or until nice and smooth. Pour into the greased muffin wells.
- For the streusel, combine all dry the ingredients in a mixing bowl and cut the butter in with a fork or pastry blender. Once crumbly, add the topping to all

the muffins. And be generous about it...much of the brown sugar and butter melts into the muffin as it bakes...and the pecans get crunchy on top.

- Bake in the preheated oven for 21-23 minutes.
- To Freeze: Let cool completely before adding to a plastic freezer baggie or container.
- To Thaw and Reheat: Let sit on the counter for a bit, or reheat in the microwave on the defrost setting.

[Freezer Friendly Blueberry Oatmeal Pancakes](#)

Yield – 18 – 4" pancakes

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 20 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cup flour
- 2/3 cup quick cooking oats
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup oil or melted butter
- 2 3/4 cup milk
- 2 cups blueberries

Directions

- Whisk together all of the ingredients in a large mixing bowl.
- Pour 1/4 cup of batter onto a hot griddle and cook the pancakes.
- Serve with butter and syrup.

To Freeze: Save your bread bags and use them to store your pancakes. Cool pancakes completely, then stack in bread bags and freeze.

To Thaw and Reheat: Two cycles on Level One of my toaster oven works perfectly. Adjust accordingly for your machine.

[Pancakes with Peach Syrup](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes for the pancakes

Cooking Time – 10 minutes for the syrup

Ingredients

- Favorite pancake mix
- 3 Tbsp butter
- 4 Tbsp maple syrup
- 2 large peaches, sliced
- Couple dashes cinnamon

Directions

- Mix up your favorite pancake mix and start cooking.
- Add the butter and maple syrup to a medium size skillet and heat until the butter melts. Stir in the peach slices and reduce heat to medium-low. Sprinkle a little cinnamon over the top. Stirring often, cook for 7 to 9 minutes, or until the peaches have darkened slightly and softened. Remove from heat until pancakes are ready for the "Peach Syrup." A note on the Peach Syrup: I would not freeze this syrup. I would make it fresh while the pancakes are cooking.
- Serve pancakes with Peach Syrup.

To Freeze: Save your bread bags and use them to store your pancakes. Cool pancakes completely, then stack in bread bags and freeze.

To Thaw and Reheat: Two cycles on Level One of my toaster oven works perfectly. Adjust accordingly for your machine.

Carrot Cake Pancakes With Cream Cheese Syrup

Yield – 18 - 3" size pancakes

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 – 1 3/4 cups milk, depending on how thick you like your pancakes
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup applesauce
- 2 Tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 Tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 1/4 cup grated carrots

Syrup:

- Equal parts cream cheese and maple syrup
- dash of cinnamon

Directions

- In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, cinnamon, baking powder and salt.
- Whisk in the milk, egg, applesauce, maple syrup, and melted butter. Fold in the grated carrots.
- Cook pancakes on hot, greased griddle. Repeat until all batter is used.
- To make cream cheese syrup, whisk together equal parts of maple syrup and cream cheese and add a dash or two of cinnamon.
- Pour over hot pancakes.

To Freeze: Save your bread bags and use them to store your pancakes. Cool pancakes completely, then stack in bread bags and freeze.

To Thaw and Reheat: Two cycles on Level One of my toaster oven works perfectly. Adjust accordingly for your machine.

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Waffles

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups wheat flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 t pumpkin pie spice
- 1 pinch salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1 3/4 cups milk
- 1 1/2 cups mini chocolate chips
- 4 tablespoons margarine, melted and cooled
- Butter and Syrup

Directions

- Mix all above ingredients minus the fruit/butter and syrup in blender or in mixing bowl with hand mixer.
- Place on greased waffle iron. Cook until steam stops escaping from the waffle iron.
- Serve Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Waffles.

To Freeze: Save your bread bags and use them to store your waffles. Cool pancakes completely, then stack in bread bags and freeze.

To Thaw and Reheat: Two cycles on Level One of my toaster oven works perfectly. Adjust accordingly for your machine.

Homemade Freezer Friendly Whole Wheat Pizza Crust

Yield – 14" crust, 4 to 6 servings

Preparation Time – 20 minutes

Cooking Time – up to 20 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cup lukewarm water
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 3 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning (or 1/2 tsp basil, 1/2 tsp oregano)
- 1 Tbsp active dry yeast (1 packet)
- 1/4 cup whole wheat flour

Directions

- Place all of the ingredients into the bread machine, in the order listed. Set on dough cycle and run it.
- Preheat oven to 400. If necessary, spray baking pan or dish with non-stick cooking spray.
- Once complete, add some whole wheat flour to the counter and knead the dough into a ball, coating the sticky spots well with the flour.
- Roll out into a large circle (or whatever shape your baking dish is) and transfer to the baking dish/pan/stone. Prepare the edges of the dough and roll out evenly.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes. Add sauce, cheese and toppings, then bake for another 8-10 minutes or until cheese has melted.
- Slice and serve Whole Wheat Pizza.

To Freeze Dough: Take the kneaded and floured dough and place into a plastic freezer baggie and freeze.

To Thaw Dough: Thaw completely before reshaping and baking as directed above.

To Freeze Crust: Bake the crust for the 10 minutes as specified above, then let cool completely before wrapping in plastic wrap and freezer.

To Thaw and Reheat Baked Crust: Let the crust thaw on the countertop and then bake for 8 minutes at 400 degrees. Then add toppings and bake again for a few minutes until cheese has melted.

To Freeze Pizza: Bake crust for 10 minutes, add toppings as directed, and bake for additional 8-10 minutes. Let cool before slicing and adding pizza slices to plastic freezer baggies and add to freezer.

To Thaw and Reheat Baked Pizza: Let thaw on the countertop and eat cold. ☺ Or, reheat on defrost in the microwave. You could also let the pizza slices partially thaw on the countertop and then reheat at 350 for 10-12 minutes, or until cheese begins to melt again.

Coconut Key Lime Bread

Yield – 24 slices, 2 9×5 loaf pans

Preparation Time – 15 minutes

Cooking Time – 50 to 55 minutes

Ingredients

- 2/3 cup butter
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2 key limes, zested and juiced
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 3 cups flour
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup milk
- 3/4 cup sweetened coconut flakes

Coconut Lime Glaze

- 2 key limes, zested and juiced
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 Tbsp sweetened coconut flakes, finely chopped
- Drops of milk, if needed to thin the glaze

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350 F. Spray 2 9×5-inch loaf pans with non-stick cooking spray.
- In a stand mixer bowl or using a hand mixer, cream the butter and sugar. Stir in the eggs, one at a time, until creamy batter forms.
- Add the zest and juice from 2 key limes, the vanilla and mix until smooth. Add the flour, baking powder, salt and mix together. Mix in the milk, then fold in the coconut flakes.
- Spoon and scrape the batter into the prepared loaf pans and bake in the preheated oven for 50 to 55 minutes, or until knife comes out of the middle clean. Let cool on cooling racks for about an hour.
- Prepare the glaze in a small bowl by mixing the zest and juice from 1 key lime with the powdered sugar. If needed, add a few drops of milk to thin out the glaze. Mix in the finely chopped shredded coconut, then pour the glaze of the tops of both loafs of bread.

To Freeze: Freeze before adding the glaze. Let cool completely and freeze the loaf whole, or slice into snack or dessert size portions and freeze individually in small plastic baggies.

To Thaw: Whole loaf – let thaw in the fridge overnight, then on the countertop until thaw. Glaze before serving. Slices – let thaw on the countertop for 10-15 minutes. Drizzle some of the glaze on the pieces as you serve them.

Overnight Slow Cooker Baked Oatmeal

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 5 hours overnight in the slow cooker

Ingredients

- 4 cups quick cooking oats
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- Toppings – milk, yogurt, cream, berries, sliced bananas, favorite fruit

Directions

- Whisk the ingredients, minus the toppings, together in a mixing bowl. Batter will be slightly 'loose.'
- Generously spray a 5 or 6 quart slow cooker with non-stick cooking spray. Pour the mixture into the slow cooker.
- Set the slow cooker on low and cook for 5 hours. Keep warm until ready to serve.
- Serve Overnight Slow Cooker Baked Oatmeal with milk/cream/yogurt and fresh fruit.

To Freeze: Cook the baked oatmeal completely, then cut it up into individual single serving portions and place in plastic sandwich freezer baggies.

To Reheat: Use the microwave or toaster oven, or else drop them frozen right into lunch boxes and they will thaw in time for lunch.

Peaches & Cream Baked Oatmeal

Yield – 8 servings, 9×13 inch dish

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 3 cups quick cooking oats
- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1/4 cup canola or vegetable oil
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 3 ripe peaches, diced (peel them if you wish!)

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350. Lightly grease a 9×13 inch glass baking dish with non-stick cooking spray.
- In a mixing bowl or stand mixer, whisk together all of the ingredients, except the peaches. Gently fold in the diced peaches and pour into the prepared baking dish.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 25-30 minutes, or until set in the middle.
- Serve Peaches and Cream Baked Oatmeal with milk or cream.

To Freeze: Cook the baked oatmeal completely, then cut it up into individual single serving portions and place in plastic sandwich freezer baggies.

To Reheat: Use the microwave or toaster oven, or else drop them frozen right into lunch boxes and they will thaw in time for lunch.

[Pumpkin Spice Baked Oatmeal](#)

Yield – 8 to 10 breakfast servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 35 to 40 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 1/2 cup oil
- 3/4 cup canned pumpkin (1/2 of 15 oz. can)
- 2 1/4 cups milk
- 1/4 cup maple syrup or syrup
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 2 1/2 teaspoon [homemade pumpkin pie spice](#)
- 1 Tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup wheat flour
- 4 cups quick cooking oats

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350. Lightly grease a 9×13 inch baking dish with non-stick cooking spray.
- In a stand mixer or large mixing bowl, beat together the eggs, applesauce, oil, canned pumpkin, milk, syrup and brown sugar until smooth.
- Add in the pie spice, baking powder, salt, flour and oats. Beat on low until “loose” batter forms. (It will seem runny, that’s OK!)
- Pour batter into the greased baking dish and bake in the preheated oven for 30-35 minutes, or until cooked through in the center of the dish.
- Let cool slightly before serving. Serve with milk, yogurt, Greek yogurt, or as is.
- Note: If you prefer it a little sweeter, add a little brown sugar or maple syrup. Enjoy!

To Freeze: Cook the baked oatmeal completely, then cut it up into individual single serving portions and place in plastic sandwich freezer baggies.

To Reheat: Use the microwave or toaster oven, or else drop them frozen right into lunch boxes and they will thaw in time for lunch.

Baked Oatmeal with Scrambled Eggs

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 3 cups of quick cooking oats
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp baking powder
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 cup fresh blueberries
- Vanilla or plain yogurt, or cream, or milk
- 8 eggs
- 1/2 cup milk
- Salt/pepper

Directions

- In large mixing bowl, whisk 2 eggs, applesauce, sugar and milk. Once creamy, add oats, salt and baking powder and mix through. (If you wish to add in any fruits, add about 1 cup into the batter at this point.) **Gluten free: [Use certified GF oats](#). They are more expensive, but this dish would be worth it!
- Pour batter into greased 9×13 baking dish. Sprinkle top with brown sugar and cinnamon. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes.
- Remove from oven and let cool for 5 minutes before serving. Don't wait too long, as you want to serve it warm! Top with your preferred topping: vanilla or plain yogurt, or cream, or milk.
- Just before taking the baked oatmeal out of the oven, whisk together 8 eggs, milk, salt and pepper. Add to skillet over medium-high heat. Scramble to your likeness.
- Serve warm Baked Oatmeal with Scrambled Eggs.

To Freeze: Cook the baked oatmeal completely, then cut it up into individual single serving portions and place in plastic sandwich freezer baggies.

To Reheat: Use the microwave or toaster oven, or else drop them frozen right into lunch boxes and they will thaw in time for lunch.

Strawberry Rhubarb Baked Oatmeal

Yield – 12 servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 30 minutes

Ingredients

- about 2 cups diced rhubarb
- about 3 cups diced strawberries
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup applesauce
- 1/4 cup canola or vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 3 cups quick cooking oats
- 1/2 cup wheat flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 – 1/2 cup brown sugar, for sprinkling

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350. Spray a 9×13 baking dish.
- Toss the rhubarb and strawberries in the baking dish.
- In a mixing bowl, whisk together the remaining ingredients, except the brown sugar. Pour the batter over top of the fruit and stir gently to combine the fruit.
- Sprinkle the brown sugar over the top.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 25 to 30 minutes, or until a toothpick in the middle comes out clean.
- Serve Strawberry Rhubarb Baked Oatmeal with milk, cream, yogurt (or even with ice cream as a dessert!).

To Freeze: Cook the baked oatmeal completely, then cut it up into individual single serving portions and place in plastic sandwich freezer baggies.

To Reheat: Use the microwave or toaster oven, or else drop them frozen right into lunch boxes and they will thaw in time for lunch.

Triple Berry Baked Oatmeal

Yield – 12 servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 pint blueberries
- 1 pint blackberries
- 1 pint raspberries
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup applesauce
- 1/4 cup canola or vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 3 cups quick cooking oats
- 1/2 cup wheat flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup brown sugar, for sprinkling
- 2 tsp cinnamon, for sprinkling
- 1 tsp nutmeg, for sprinkling

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350. Spray a 9 × 13 baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
- Toss the blueberries, raspberries and blackberries in the baking dish.
- In a mixing bowl, whisk together the remaining ingredients, except the brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg. Pour the batter over top of the fruit and stir gently to combine the fruit.
- Sprinkle the brown sugar over the top. Then sprinkle the cinnamon and nutmeg over the top.
- Bake in the preheated oven for 25 to 30 minutes, or until toothpick comes out clean in the middle.
- Serve Triple Berry Baked Oatmeal with milk, cream, or yogurt for breakfast, or drop in a lunchbox, or for a fun weeknight ‘brinner.’

To Freeze: Cook the baked oatmeal completely, then cut it up into individual single serving portions and place in plastic sandwich freezer baggies.

To Reheat: Use the microwave or toaster oven, or else drop them frozen right into lunch boxes and they will thaw in time for lunch.

[Whole Wheat Pumpkin Cinnamon Rolls](#)

Yield – 24 - 26 rolls

Preparation Time – 3 hours

Cooking Time – 20 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups warm milk
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1 tsp salt
- 4 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 Tbsp yeast
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup pumpkin puree

Filling

- Couple Tbsp butter
- about 1/2 cup pumpkin puree
- about 1/2 cup brown sugar
- about 1 Tbsp [homemade pumpkin pie spice](#) ^[2]

Icing

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 Tbsp + 1 tsp [homemade pumpkin pie spice](#) ^[2]
- 2 Tbsp pumpkin puree
- Milk, 1/4 tsp at a time

Directions

- Add the dough ingredients into the bread machine in the order they are listed and set on the dough cycle.*
- Once the dough cycle is complete, add the dough to a clean and floured countertop and turn the dough, kneading it until smooth. Divide into 2 balls and roll out into 2 rectangles.
- Spread thin layer of butter, then pumpkin puree, then brown sugar and spice mix. Roll tightly and then slice into 1" inch wide rolls.
- Place the rolls into greased baking dishes, leaving a little space between the rolls for them to expand and rise. Cover with a dish towel and let rise for an hour in a warm place in your kitchen.
- Preheat oven to 350. After the rolls have risen, bake for 16-20 minutes, or until middle rolls are cooked through.
- Prepare icing by mixing the powdered sugar with the spice mix, then gently stir in the pumpkin puree. Finally, add milk, 1/4 tsp at a time, mixing well until icing forms consistency you prefer.

- Add icing to the tops of the rolls and serve warm.

*If you don't have a bread machine, you can make the bread by hand. In a small bowl, add the milk, sugar and yeast and let it proof. In a large mixing bowl, add the beaten egg and pumpkin puree, salt and then pour in the milk-yeast mixture and gently combine. Add the flour, one cup at a time, stirring into a wet dough, then into more of a dry dough. Cover with dish towel and let rise in warm place. Once the dough is ready, complete directions listed above.

To Freeze: Make the rolls all the way through the entire cooking process and freeze any extras you save from hungry family members.

To Thaw: Thaw in the fridge overnight, on the counter for a few hours, or in the microwave.

Alternative Freezing Method: You can freeze the raw cinnamon rolls before the second rise (once they are assembled).

Alternative Thawing: Thaw in fridge overnight to let them slow rise, and then bake as directed above. TIP: If they are still cold and not rising after being overnight in the fridge, then you can place them in a warm environment once they are unfrozen and let them rise for an hour or so before baking.



Freezer Must Haves

Mashed Sweet Potatoes

Mashed Potatoes

Cooked Dried Beans

Cookie Dough

Herbs

Homemade Spice Mixes

Freezer Strawberry Jam

Freezer Smoothies - Make Ahead

No Bake Cookie Smoothie

Mango Smoothie

Orange, Mango, Banana Dessert Smoothie

Banana Strawberry Peach Smoothie

Mango Raspberry Smoothie

Pomegranate Smoothie

Kale, Kiwi, Apple, & Banana Smoothie

Berry Cherry Jubilee Smoothie

Fiesta Breakfast Smoothie

[Mashed Sweet Potatoes](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Prep Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 8 hours in slow cooker

Ingredients

- 5-6 medium sweet potatoes
- 2-3 Tbsp butter
- 1 Tbsp cinnamon
- 2-3 Tbsp brown sugar, optional
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans, optional

Directions

- Cut a slit in each of the sweet potatoes, lengthwise down the middle. Add the sweet potatoes to the base of the slow cooker and add about 1 cup of water. Enough to cover the bottom with 1/4 inch. Set on low and cook for 8 hours.
- Carefully remove the sweet potatoes and let cool for a few minutes before removing the skin. Scoop out all the soft flesh into a mixing bowl. Add butter (you don't need a ton because they are already very soft) and cinnamon and mix together.
- Sprinkle the brown sugar over the top. Sprinkle the pecans over the top. (Both of these are optional! I generally don't serve 'fancy sweet potatoes' for regular weeknight dinners. I would add them to a holiday side dish, however!)
- Serve Slow Cooker Mashed Sweet Potatoes as side dish.

To Freeze: Let cool completely and add mashed potatoes to gallon size freezer baggie and flat freeze. Freeze for up to 6 months in fridge freezer or 12 months in a deep freezer.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in a warm bowl of water for about 20 minutes, before reheating. Reheat in a saucepan over low heat for 10-15 minutes, stirring often.

Mashed Potatoes

Yield – 6 to 8 servings

Preparation Time -10 minutes

Cooking Time – 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 Tbsp white sugar
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 large white onions, sliced
- 6 large potatoes
- About 1/3 cup butter
- About 1/2 cup milk (butter-milk portions vary, depending on potato size)
- (Use sour cream, cream cheese...whatever you like to use when making your mashed potatoes)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- Caramelize the onions – heat the olive oil, sugar and balsamic vinegar in a large skillet. Add the chopped onions. Let cook over medium-low heat for 30 minutes, stirring often.
- Peel, cube and boil potatoes in a large pot of water. Once soft, drain and mash with the butter, milk (or whatever else) and salt and pepper
- Combine the mashed potatoes with the caramelized onions.
- Serve warm as side dish.

To Freeze: Let cool completely and add mashed potatoes to gallon size freezer baggie and flat freeze.

To Thaw and Reheat: Thaw in a warm bowl of water for about 20 minutes, before reheating. Reheat in a saucepan with a little bit of milk over low heat for 10-15 minutes, stirring often.

Cooked Dried Beans

Yield – 4 meals worth

Preparation Time - 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 1 hour 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb. dried beans
- Salt and pepper

Directions

- Soak the beans overnight or for at least 2 hours in hot water.
- Drain and rinse the soaked beans.
- Add the beans to a large stockpot or saucepan with 2 inches of water covering the beans. Bring to a boil.
- Once bubbling, reduce heat to medium low, cover and boil for 1 hour 15 minutes. Check for tenderness. If beans are tender, remove from heat and drain. If not, you can cook for another 15 minutes.
- Let the beans cool and then divide into 2 cup portions, or 1 – 15 oz. cans worth of beans.

To Freeze: Let cool completely and to small sandwich baggie sizes baggies and freezer in 2 cup portions.

To Thaw: Let thaw in fridge or on counter before using in recipes that call for can of beans.

[Freezing Cookie Dough](#)

Freezing Cookie Dough Balls

Simply scoop out a small dough ball's worth and place onto a piece of wax paper on a baking sheet. Flash freeze for 20-30 minutes, then transfer dough balls to plastic freezer baggie. You could also lay the balls flat in a plastic freezer baggie and freeze them in a "tray form." Freeze, up to 3 months.

To cook, pull out the ones you will cook and place them on the baking sheet and let them warm up some while the oven preheats. I've found that if they just get a few minutes out of the freezer to warm up to room temp, the baking time does not need to be modified from the original recipe. If you are taking them straight from the freezer to a hot oven, I'd add no more than 2 minutes of cooking time...watch them closely as to not overbake!

Freezing Cookie Dough Rolls

If you're wanting to make cookies using the "slice and bake" method, then I recommend freezing the dough in a log shape. Lay out a piece of aluminum foil and then a sheet of plastic wrap over the foil. Drop the dough onto the plastic wrap and shape into a circular log, much like the "rolls" that you purchase at the grocery store. Press until it's uniform in shape. Wrap the plastic wrap around it and twist off the ends. Then wrap the foil around the plastic wrap. Freeze, up to 3 months.

To bake, slice and bake as directed in the recipe. Thicker slices may require an additional 1 to 1 1/2 minutes of cooking if the slice is mostly frozen.

[How to Freeze Fresh Herbs](#)

- Soak the herbs to remove any dirt.
- Rinse them well.
- Puree with some water in a blender or food processor. Any combination of herbs will work, whatever your favorite one are.
- Freeze in [ice cube trays](#).
- Once frozen, pop out and store in a freezer baggie or container.
- Use frozen herb cubes in your favorite pasta sauces, soups and stews!

[Homemade Pumpkin Pie Spice](#)

Yield – almost 3 Tablespoons

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 Tbsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp allspice
- 1 tsp nutmeg

Directions

- Place all ingredients in small, sealable container and mix together. Use as directed in recipes that call for pumpkin pie spice.
- Store in a dry place or freezer, up to 6 months.

[Homemade Apple Pie Spice](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp allspice
- 1/2 tsp ground cloves
- Dash of cardamom (optional)

Directions

- Place all ingredients in small, sealable container and mix together. Use as directed in recipes that call for apple pie spice.
- Store in a dry place or freezer, up to 6 months.

[Homemade Ranch Dressing Seasoning Mix](#)

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp dried parsley
- 1 tsp dried dill
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1/2 tsp dried basil
- 1/2 tsp pepper

Directions

- Add each of the dried spices to a bowl and gently stir.
- Store in a resealable plastic baggie or small ball canning jar with tight fitting lid in your spice cabinet. You can also store it in a sealed container in the freezer.
- To make the ranch dressing, whisk together 1/3 cup mayonnaise with 1/4 cup milk (more or less depending on the consistency you want) with 1 Tbsp of the homemade ranch dressing seasoning mix. Season with salt, to taste. Use immediately and can refrigerate for up to 3 days.
- Makes about 4 Tbsp worth of mix. Or use the ratios above and mix up however much you'll need!

[No Sugar Strawberry Freezer Jam](#)

From the Ball No Sugar Pectin Package

Yield – 4 8 oz. containers-ish

Preparation Time – 20 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 3 lbs. strawberries, hulled and stems removed
- 1 3/4 cups apple juice
- 1 1/2 package no sugar, low sugar pectin (I find that using 1 1/2 package really gets the jam to set perfectly!)

Directions

- Mash the strawberries in a large bowl.
- In a small saucepan, bring the apple juice and pectin to a boil and boil for 1 minute.
- Pour straight into the mashed strawberries and stir hard for 1 minute.
- Ladle into the freezer containers and place in the refrigerator overnight to let it cool slowly and set.
- Then store in the freezer.
- Good in the freezer for up to 1 year, in the fridge for 3 weeks.

[Freezer Smoothies - Make Ahead](#)

Set aside a few minutes on the weekend or when you have the energy on a weekday evening and package up what you would normally add to the blender in a quart size freezer baggie.

Pour some milk or yogurt into an ice cube tray, then freeze.

To each make ahead smoothie baggie, add a few cubes of frozen milk or yogurt in with your favorite fruits and freeze it all up!

When you're ready to make your smoothie, just dump it all in, add a little water or juice so it will blend well and puree away!

No Bake Cookie Smoothie

Yield – 2 - 1 cup servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 10 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 frozen, sliced banana
- 1/2 cup milk (any kind is fine)
- 1 tablespoon creamy peanut butter
- 2-3 teaspoons cocoa powder
- 3 tablespoons uncooked oatmeal
- Additional ice if desired

Directions

- Place all ingredients in blender and blend until smooth. Enjoy!

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

Dana's Mango Smoothie

Yield – 4 - 1 cup servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups frozen mango chunks
- 1 ½ cups orange juice
- 1 6 - 8 oz. container of peach or vanilla yogurt
- 1 banana
- 1/2 cup old fashion oats (optional)

Directions

- Blend frozen mango and orange juice together until smooth.
- Add yogurt, banana and oats and blend until smooth.

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

Orange, Mango, Banana Dessert Smoothies

Yield – 4 – 1 cup servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 oranges, peeled
- 1 mango, diced
- 1 banana
- 1 1/2 cups vanilla ice cream
- 1/2 cup fresh squeezed orange juice
- 1/2 cup cold water

Directions

- Peel the oranges.
- Add all the ingredients to a blender and puree.
- Serve immediately.

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

[Banana, Strawberry, Peach Smoothie](#)

Yield – 4 – 1 cup servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 banana
- 1 peach, seed removed
- 1 cup strawberries, fresh or frozen
- 1 cup milk
- 2 Tbsp ground flaxseed
- 1 Tbsp sweetener...honey, agave, sugar
- Water to fill blender to 4 cups

Directions

- Add banana, peach (with or without skin...lots of nutrients in the skin!), and strawberries into the blender. Add milk, flaxseed and sweetener.
- Fill blender with water until the liquid level reaches 4 cups.
- Blend on low for 30 seconds, then blend on high for 30 seconds, or until smooth and creamy!
- Drink immediately!

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

Mango Raspberry Smoothie

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 5 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 cup frozen mango
- 1 cup frozen raspberries
- 1/2 cup milk
- 3 1/2 cups of water
- 2 Tbsp ground flaxseed

Directions

- Add fruit, flaxseed, milk and water to blender. Blend!

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

Pomegranate Smoothie

Yield – 4 – 1/2 cup servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 large pomegranate, deseeded
- 1 medium banana
- 6-8 pieces fresh or frozen mango
- 3-4 pieces fresh or frozen strawberries
- 1/2 – 1 cup rice milk

Directions

- Remove seeds from pomegranate by opening and scooping out the seeds.
- Blend all ingredients until smooth. Add more rice milk to desired consistency.

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

[Kale, Kiwi, Apple, & Banana Smoothie](#)

Yield – 4 - 1 cup servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 medium bananas
- 1 kiwi
- About 1 cup kale, stem removed
- 1 apple, peeled, cored and cut into slices
- 2 cups milk
- 2 Tbsp sweetener – honey, agave, sugar
- *Optional:* 2 Tbsp ground flaxseed

Directions

- Place all the ingredients into a blender.
- Add water up to the 4 cup marker on the blender.
- Blend until smooth.

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

[Berry Cherry Jubilee Green Smoothie](#)

Adapted from [Simple Green Smoothies](#)

Yield – 2 servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cups spinach, fresh
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup cherries*, pitted
- 1 cup mixed berries*
- 1 banana

Directions

- Blend spinach and water until smooth.
- Next add the remaining fruits and blend again.

TIPS: Make sure to remove cherry pits before blending. Sprinkle chia seeds on top for a light crunchy texture.

*Use at least one frozen fruit to make the green smoothie cold.

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

[Fiesta Breakfast Smoothie](#)

Yield – 4 servings

Preparation Time – 10 minutes

Cooking Time – 0 minutes

Ingredients

- about 1 1/2 cups frozen strawberries
- about 1 1/2 cups frozen pineapple
- 1 cup chopped kale
- 2 cups orange juice
- 2 cups sweetened coconut milk

Directions

- Add all the ingredients to a blender and blend until smooth.

To Freeze Ahead: See “Freezer Smoothies – Make Ahead” on page 100. Otherwise, you can freeze individual fruits and greens as directed in the beginning chapter of the guide.

Free Printable Resources

There are a number of free printables available for you to print from 5DollarDinners.com.

Visit 5DollarDinners.com/Freezer-Printables to print your freezer inventory list, grocery shopping lists and more.