

**Survey
(Giveaway):**

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**OKLAHOMA COUNTY
EXTENSION**



**Metropolitan
LIBRARY SYSTEM**

Get Cooking: **FREEZER MEALS**

Presented by:

Taylor Conner, MS, RD, LD
Family & Consumer Sciences Educator
Oklahoma County OSU Extension

Today We Will Cover

- Advantages of Freezing
- Creating Healthy Freezer Meal Plans
- Best Packaging Methods
- Steps to Efficiently Prepare Meals
- Food Safety & Freezer Foods

Advantages

- Many foods can be frozen.
- Good natural color, flavor and nutritive value can be retained.
- Texture usually better than for other methods of food preservation.
 - A personal preference.
- Foods can be frozen in less time than they can be dried or canned.



Advantages

- Simple procedure.
- Adds convenience to food preparation.
- Proportions can be adapted to needs unlike other methods.
- Kitchen stays cooler, more comfortable.



Make it Healthy

Aim to include these 5 groups 3 times a day!

Vegetables



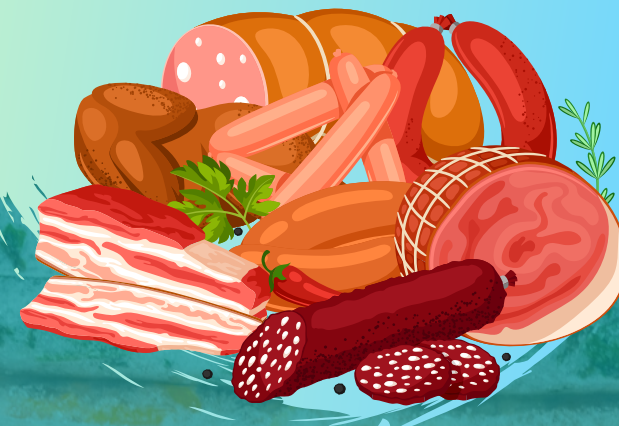
- Rich in fiber, antioxidants, vitamin C, K, & other nutrients!
- Leave peel/skin on for added benefits
- Choose fresh, frozen, or canned (low sodium)

Grains



- Rich in fiber, B vitamins and other nutrients!
- Choose whole grains
- Reduces risk of heart disease

Protein



- Rich, easy source of protein, B vitamins, zinc, and other essential amino acids
- Choose lean cuts of meat (95% lean)

Make it Healthy

Dairy



- Rich in calcium, vitamin D, and protein
- Dairy helps maintain good bone and muscle health
- Choose low-fat or fat-free options for less calories

Fruits



- Choose fresh, frozen, or canned (not packed in syrup)
- Add it as a side dish or as a dessert

Avoid/Limit



- Added Sugars
- Salty foods/Sodium
- Sugary Beverages

Don't
forget

Packaging Methods



- Moisture-vapor resistant.
 - Prevents transfer of moisture and air in and out of the package.
- Durable and leak-proof.
- Does not become brittle and crack at low temperatures.
- Resistant to oil, grease or water.
- Protects foods from absorption of “off” flavors or odors.
- Easy to seal and label.

Types of Packaging Material

- Rigid Containers
 - Plastic freezer containers.
 - Wide-mouth canning/freezing jars.
 - Good for liquids or soft, juicy, or liquid-packed foods.
 - May be reusable.
 - Hold their shape and can be stored upright.
 - Can be hard to label.
 - May pop open during storage.

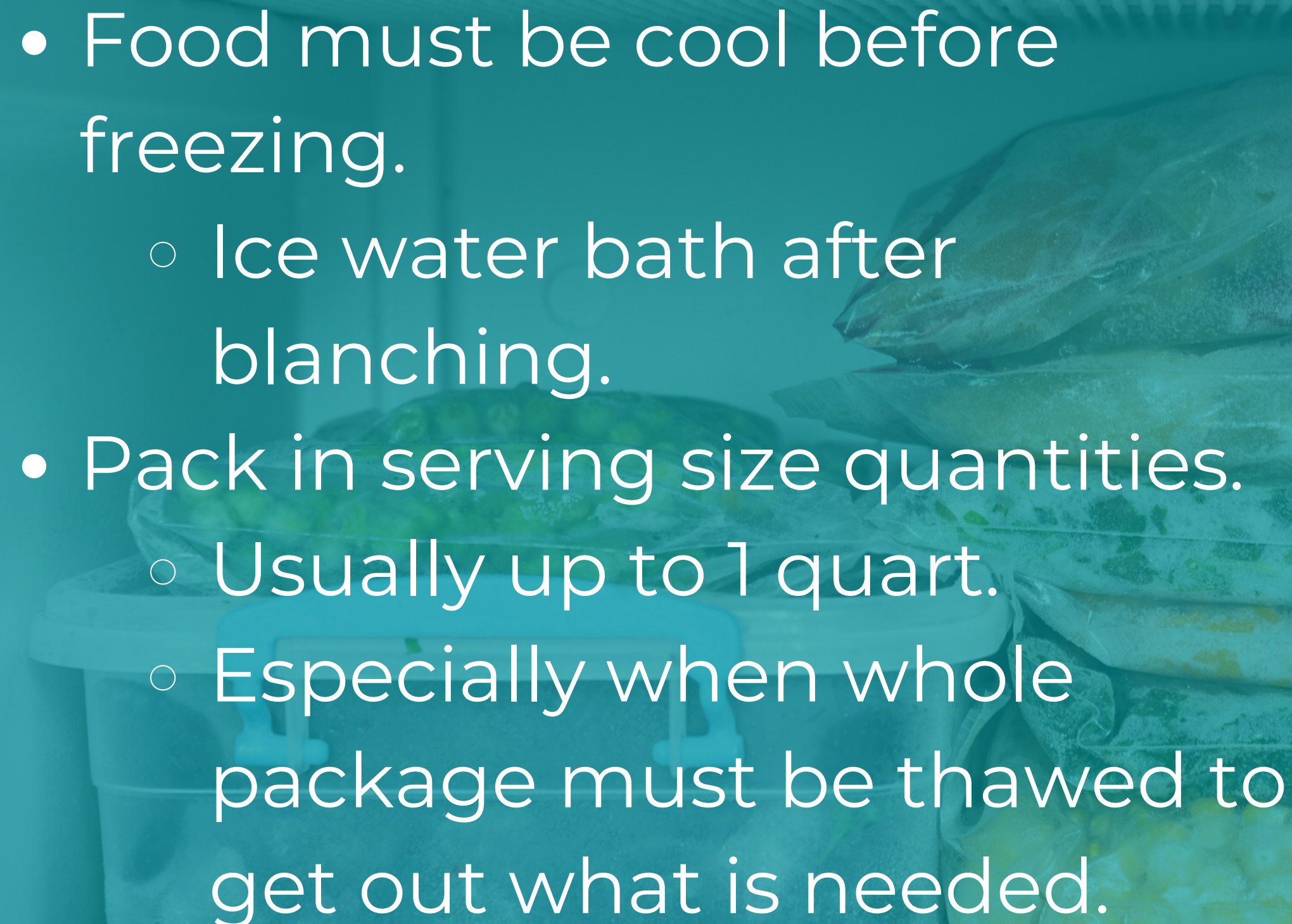


Types of Packaging Material

- Non-Rigid Containers
 - Bags
 - Wrappings – plastic (such as polyethylene), heavy-duty aluminum foil, laminated paper
- Good for firm, non-juicy foods.



Packaging Foods to be Frozen

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- Food must be cool before freezing.
 - Ice water bath after blanching.
 - Pack in serving size quantities.
 - Usually up to 1 quart.
 - Especially when whole package must be thawed to get out what is needed.



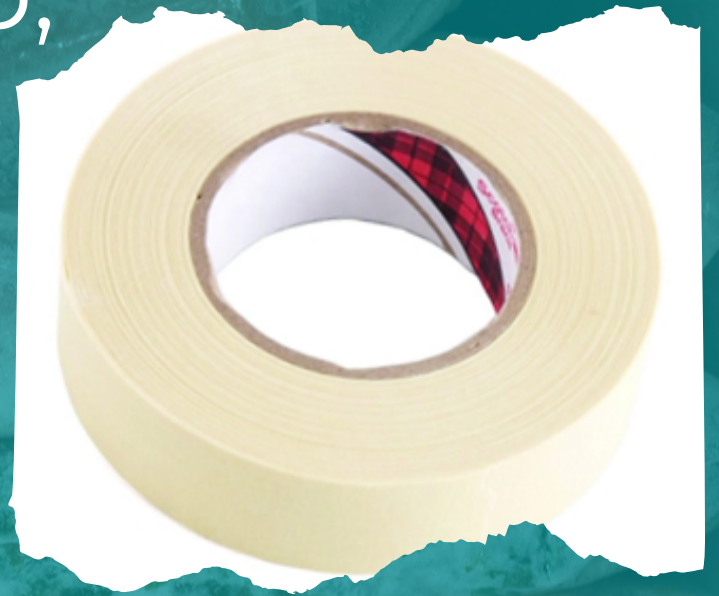
Packaging Foods to be Frozen

- Pack foods tightly –
 - Avoid trapped air (oxygen).
 - Not to waste space.
- However, most foods need headspace or room for some expansion at the top, except:
 - Uneven vegetables & fruits like broccoli, asparagus, strawberries
 - Bony pieces of meat
 - Tray-packed foods
 - Breads



Packaging Foods to be Frozen

- Press all air from bagged foods.
 - Except for headspace.
 - Seal non-zippered bags by twisting the loose top, and then folding the top of it down over itself (gooseneck).
- Secure with twist-tie, rubber band or string.
- Use tight lids on rigid containers.
- Keep sealing edges clean and dry. Use freezer tape over seams of looser-fitting covers.
- Trapped food or liquids in sealing area will freeze, expand, and loosen seal.



Labels

- Name of product
- Added ingredients
- Form of food - halves, whole, ground, etc.
- Packaging date
- Number of servings or amount

9/15/16

Ground Beef
1 pound



Step 1. Cool foods "slightly" at room temperature before refrigeration

- Food does not need to be completely cool before it is refrigerated.
- To help food cool slightly before refrigeration:
 - Place food in a shallow container on a cooling rack on kitchen counter to allow air to circulate all round pan for 20 to 30 minutes.
 - Limit depth of food to 2 inches.



Step 2. Complete cooling of foods in the refrigerator

- Cool foods to refrigerator temperature before bagging them for your freezer. It is OK to refrigerate foods while they're still warm.
- LOOSELY cover food upon refrigeration to allow heat to escape and protect food from accidental contamination.



Step 3. Pack food into freezer bags

- Use "freezer" bags, not "storage" bags for storing food in the freezer.
 - Thicker and keep the food fresh longer.
- Freeze in thin, flattened shape.
 - Speeds freezing and hastens thawing.
 - Mounded shapes take longer to thaw completely.
 - Flatter packages stack better in freezer.



Step 4. Label Packages

- Label foods using freezer tape, gummed freezer labels or permanent marking pens/crayons.
- Include on label:
 - Name of food
 - Packaging date
 - Number of servings or amount
 - Additional helpful information, such as form of food (sliced, chopped, etc.), any special ingredients



Step 5. Freeze the Packages



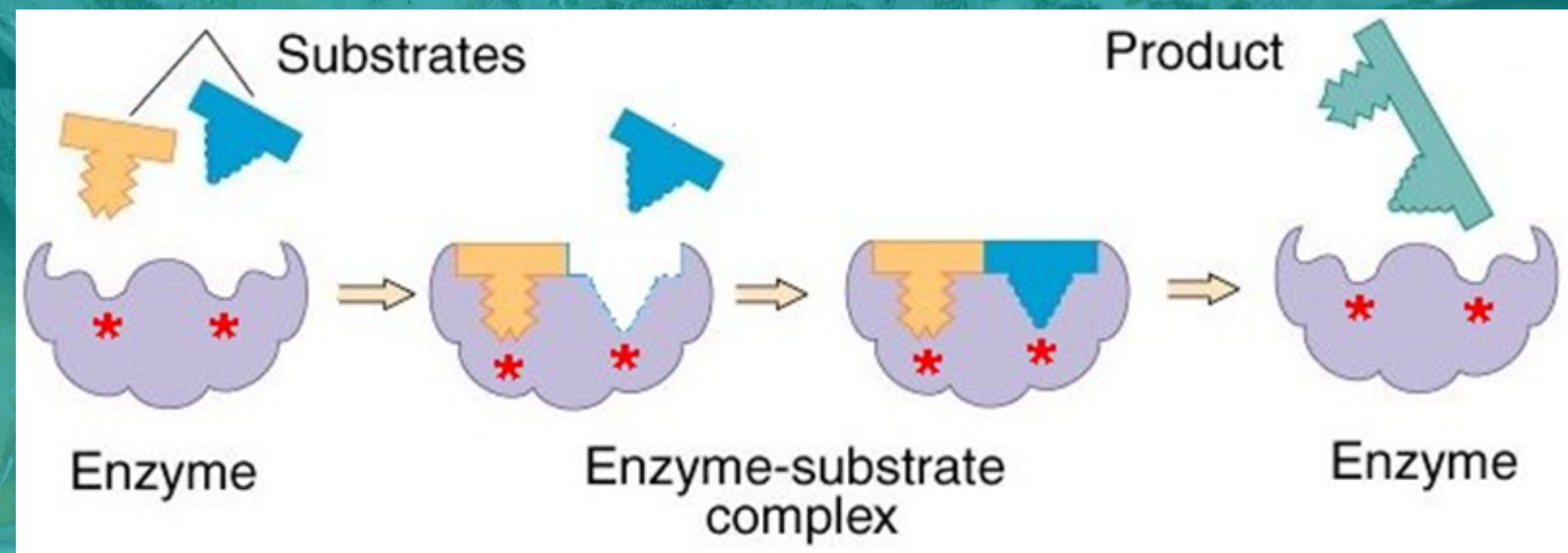
- Place filled bags on a flat surface in freezer, such as a metal pan.
- Do not stack bags until frozen for faster freezing.
- After food is frozen solid, remove bags from pan and store, stacked, directly on freezer shelf.
 - Or turn on edge and store vertically.

Step 6. Thaw Safely!

- DO NOT thaw at room temperature. If foods are left at room temperature too long, bacteria may grow and produce heat-resistant toxins that can cause food-borne illness. Cooking may not be able to destroy these toxins.
- Best to plan ahead for slow, safe refrigerator thawing.
- Small items may thaw overnight in the refrigerator.
- Up to 5 pnds of food should thaw in about 24 hours.
 - If there is the possibility a thawing package might leak, thaw it on a plate or a pan.

Food Safety - Be Smart!

- Food stored constantly at 0°F will always be safe.
 - Only quality suffers with lengthy freezer storage.
 - Freezes movement of molecules, causing microbes to enter a dormant stage.
 - Prevents growth of microorganisms that cause both food spoilage and foodborne illness.
 - Recommended storage times are for quality.



Food Safety - Be Smart!

- Food safety issues develop during thawing
 - Once thawed microbes can again become active, multiplying under the right conditions to levels that can lead to foodborne illness.
 - Since they will then grow at about the same rate as microorganisms on fresh food, you must handle thawed items as you would any perishable food.



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