



## What is Freezer Cooking and Why Does it ROCK?

So what is freezer cooking and why is it the best thing since sliced bread!

Freezer cooking is the practice of assembling partially or fully prepared meals to freeze for later. Some meals only need to be reheated while others will need final preparations such as slow cooking or baking. So whether you're cooking for 2 or 20, you are sitting down at the dinner table in a matter of minutes!

Why should you freezer cook?

- Save time
- Save money
- Less stress
- Eat Better

Okay so let's talk all about these benefits in detail

- Save time
  - When you freezer cook, you spend time to make meals to use in the future. There are two ways you can freezer cook; you can make the meals to be dinners for the next week OR you can use them to be backup meals for those times when you are like “ummmm what should we eat today?”
  - I like to, once a month, spend about an hour making these meals because it does require a little bit extra of my grocery budget (since I am planning in advance), and keep them in my freezer. This way, I can either tie them into my meal plan for next week since I know they are there OR I can use them the day of.
- Save money
  - When people first hear about freezer cooking, they often think it costs them more money because they do have to put money out in advance (and in a chunk) to buy things. BUT long term, the meals are SO much cheaper! I like to make sure that each meal I make costs LESS THAN \$5 TOTAL! That's right... TOTAL! I know so many people who eat out and can drop \$50+ for their family and that's just crazy!
  - Also, if you know you are planning to do a month freezer cooking to add some food to your freezer and backup meals, you can budget for it! I would recommend saving \$50-100 for these meals, (these specific meals cost around \$50-60 TOTAL for all 7 meals!) but the costs can vary based on ingredients and what you already have! When you go through the shopping list in the EBOOK (coming tomorrow!) I'll show you how to save money on stuff too!
- Less stress
  - Anyone else NOT love meal prepping and planning? How about coming home from work and being SO tired and not knowing what to make? OR trying to cook dinner with your kiddos running around your feet or needing homework help? All of these freezer cooking meals are for the crockpot so you can SET and FORGET! You can plop them in in the morning (I love my crockpot that has a timer in case I have to leave the house early!)
- Eat Better
  - One of the problems I had when I started freezer cooking or using my crock pot was that almost all of the meals I found had

ingredients that I just didn't love.. Aka cream of crap soup :P Food that has ingredients you can't pronounce, a super long list of nonsense, or is super processed is NOT what I want to feed my family and hopefully neither do you! So all of these recipes come from whole foods and ingredients (which is also a ton cheaper!)

- Because when you freezer cook, you don't want to take up a ton of space, each meal only had about 3-6 servings which means... not so many leftovers! Why is that awesome? Because, if you are like me, then you struggle with going back for seconds and this way you won't find yourself binging! BUT, if you and your family loves the meal, you can easily make them again and duplicate!



I want to give you the top tips I learned when shopping for a freezer cook so that you can save money, not feel super stressed out, and not spend hours at the grocery store (or even going around from store to store!)

- My first recommendation is to print out the shopping list and go through everything you already have in your house. There is nothing worse than getting ready to do your cooking and realizing you are missing ingredients
- The shopping list is split up by part of your kitchen, so go to your pantry and take out all of the spices you will need. I know this seems annoying to actually take them out but trust me, I've had those moments where I think "oh I totally have paprika" and then go to cook and NOPE, it's not there. This also helps because if you are taking them out, when you put them back on the shelf, they'll be in one section and right in front so when it's cooking day BAM, you don't have to go searching again.
- When you go to do your shop for this menu, try to only go and buy things for this. I know going to the store more than once for the week can seem

annoying but again, this way all of your stuff is still in the bags that you need. I go shopping the day before I plan to cook and keep all of the stuff that doesn't have to go in the fridge in the bags. This way, no searching for things when it's time to cook! Just pull the meat out of the fridge, grab the bags and I'm ready to go!



# 7 Healthy Freezer Recipes

## Shopping List

### **Meat**

- 5 pounds boneless skinless chicken breast
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 pound boneless pork chops

### **Pantry**

- Honey
- Soy sauce
- Rice wine vinegar
- Olive oil
- Minced Garlic
- Light brown sugar
- Ground Ginger
- Paprika
- Chili Powder
- Ground Cumin
- Ground Oregano
- Crushed Red Pepper Flakes

- Dried Parsley
- Ground Pepper
- Beef Bouillon Cubes
- Salt
- Italian Seasoning

### **Fresh Produce**

- 4 medium onions
- 1 lemon
- 1 lime
- 4 carrots
- 2 small potatoes
- 1 green pepper
- 1 red pepper

### **Frozen Produce**

- 15 oz bag frozen stir fry veggies
- 1.5 cups frozen corn

### **Canned Foods**

- 1 can crushed tomatoes
- 2 28 oz can diced tomatoes
- 1 28 oz can tomato sauce
- 2 (15 oz) cans black beans
- 20 oz can crushed pineapple



## Crockpot Italian Chicken

Makes 6 servings

### Ingredients:

- 1 small onion, diced
- 28 oz can diced tomatoes
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp dried parsley
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts

### Prep:

1. Label your freezer bag
2. Add all ingredients, putting chicken in last.
3. Remove air from bag, seal, and lay flat in freezer

### Cook:

1. Remove bag night before to thaw and place in refrigerator.
2. Cook on low setting for 4-6 hours or until chicken is cooked

Suggested Side Dish: whole wheat pasta or zoodles

## Slow Cooker Chicken Fajitas

Makes 3 servings

### Ingredients:

- 1 medium green pepper, sliced
- 1 medium red pepper, sliced
- 1 small yellow onion, peeled and sliced
- 2 large cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp honey
- Juice from 1 lime
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp paprika
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, sliced

### Prep:

1. Label your freezer bag
2. Add all ingredients, putting chicken in last.
3. Remove air from bag, seal and lay flat in freezer.

### Cook:

1. Remove bag night before to thaw and place in refrigerator.
2. Cook on low setting for 4-8 hours or until chicken is cooked.

Suggested Side Dish: Rice, Tortillas, and other Fajitas toppings!

## Crockpot Hamburger Vegetable Soup

Makes 6 Servings

### Ingredients:

- 4 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 small potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 small onion, diced
- 28 oz can of diced tomatoes
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp italian seasoning
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 4 beef bouillon cubes
- 1 pound ground beef
- 4 cups of water (not needed until day of cooking)

### Prep:

1. Label your freezer bag
2. Add all ingredients (except water), add potatoes in last.
3. Remove air from bag, seal, and lay flat in freezer

### Cook:

1. Remove bag night before to thaw and place in refrigerator.
2. Empty bag in crock pot and add water
3. Cook on low setting for 8 hours
4. Break apart beef, stir and serve

Suggested Side Dishes: Crusty Italian Bread to dip!

## Crockpot Turkey and Black Bean Chili

Makes 6 servings

### Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground turkey
- 28 oz can of tomato sauce
- 2 cans of black beans (15 oz each), drained and rinsed
- 1.5 cups frozen corn
- 1 tsp of minced garlic
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 1.5 tsp ground oregano
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes

### Prep:

1. Label your freezer bag
2. Add all ingredients, putting turkey in last.
3. Remove air from bag, seal, and lay flat in freezer

### Cook:

1. Remove bag night before to thaw and place in refrigerator.
2. Cook on low setting for 8 hours
3. Break apart ground turkey and serve

Suggested Side Dish: Rice or Tortilla Chips

## Slow Cooker Hawaiian Pork Chops

Makes 3 servings

### Ingredients

- 1 lb boneless, pork chops
- 1 large can crushed pineapples
- 2 tbsp light brown sugar
- 2 tbsp soy sauce

### Prep:

1. Label your freezer bag
2. Add in pineapple, brown sugar, soy sauce and pork (in that order)
3. Remove air from bag, seal, and lay flat in freezer

### Cook:

1. Remove bag night before to thaw and place in refrigerator.
2. Cook on low setting for 6 hours

Suggested Side Dish: Brown Rice

## Lemon Pepper Chicken

Makes 3 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Juice from one lemon
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp salt

Prep:

1. Label your freezer bag
2. Add all ingredients
3. Remove air from bag, seal, and lay flat in freezer

Cook:

1. Remove bag night before to thaw and place in refrigerator.
2. Cook on low setting for 3-6 hours or until chicken is cooked and tender.

Suggested Side Dish: Spaghetti or Rice

## Crockpot Chicken Teriyaki

Makes 3 servings

### Ingredients:

- One pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- ½ cup honey
- ½ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 large clove minced garlic
- 3 tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- 15 oz bag frozen stir fry veggies

### Prep:

1. Label your freezer bag
2. Add all ingredients, putting chicken in last.
3. Remove air from bag, seal, and lay flat in freezer

### Cook:

1. Remove bag night before to thaw and place in refrigerator.
2. Cook on low setting for 4-8 hours or until chicken is cooked



It's time to get ready to cook!!! I've been doing freezer cooking once a month for a while and have made a few mistakes and learned a ton that has helped me now be able to get my cooking done in an hour or less!!! Not only does freezer cooking save me time in my day to day, but it saves me time in general with my prep. I don't know about you, but I don't have 4-6 hours on a weekend to cook meals! I like to get all my prep done in 2 hours max!

So let's set you up for success when it's time to actually cook.

- I recommend finding 1-2 hours where you will uninterrupted. YES I am a mom of little kids like you might be. That time is NOT easy to find. BUT you can find it if you try. When I do my cooking, I get up early on a Sunday and do it in 1 hour before the kids are up. This allows me to be focused and efficient. I find it really tough to stay focused with a toddler running around so I just let my husband know that I plan to do this so if the little people get up early, I need him to be in charge. So let your stakeholders know when you're cooking and what help you need. If you have older

kiddos, get them involved! They can be the ones who add in spices or other ingredients and it's a great way to start teaching them about cooking!

- Set up your kitchen for success. Pull out ALL of the ingredients you need. EVERYTHING. I pull out all my spices, the bags from my shopping and pantry items that I bought, and anything from the fridge. I then make other stations around my counters where things are chunked together. Pull out your cutting board, gallon bags, and measuring cups. Have everything out on the counter ready for you.
- When it comes to measuring, I have two sets of measuring spoons that I use. One I use for dry spices and one for wet ones (like oils and sauces). This way I don't really have to rinse things off in between.
- My biggest tips for the rest of the cooking is to do everything assembly line style! First up, the bags. Grab your 7 freezer bags and sharpie and label them with what the meal is and how long you cook it. That way, when you pull it out of your fridge it's super easy. If there is anything else you need to know for the day of cooking (like adding water or other ingredients) write them on the bag.
- I use a napkin holder to keep my bag upright until it has enough stuff in it to not fall over. I then add my ingredients in this order; vegetables, sauces and frozen things, and then spices. When that one recipe is done, I then go to the next one. I add all of the meat for ALL 7 recipes at the end. This way, I don't have to switch cutting boards, worry about cross contamination, and have to wash my hands a million times!
- When it comes to storing, I seal all my bags and lay them flat and CAREFULLY get out as much air as I can! I lay them flat on top of each other and put the thicker and heavier ones on the bottom. This way I can store them super simply in my freezer



\*Sample bag labeled with napkin holder to fill\*



\*FREEZER BAGS STACKED\*

Whew! Okay now that you've digested all those, you are **READY** to conquer your freezer meals! Tomorrow is cooking day (so my suggestion is to plan your fun Friday out to shop and cook if you can't make it to the store today) and we'll get started and become freezer cooking masters!



It's cooking day!!!! Hopefully you had the time to do your shopping last night but if not NO WORRIES! After work today, head to the store and get your stuff! It's not too late to get it done tonight! I know you probably are like me and have exciting Friday night plans with Netflix but instead of watching that episode of Gilmore Girls, spend the time getting these meals done!

So after the kids go to bed, during naptime, or early in the morning.. It's GAME ON! Find the time today that works for you and give it a try! Here are some things to remember...

- Don't get overwhelmed. I'd love to know how long it takes you but know that EACH TIME you do this it gets easier and more efficient for you. You will find a system that works for you and don't feel like you have to be a cooking whiz! You literally just need to know how to measure stuff, put them in a bag, defrost the night before and toss in a crockpot.

- Your kitchen will probably get messy. It's par for the course. Don't put things away or try to clean up as you go. Wait until you are done in case you need something. At the end you will see what you have left (in case you missed something) still on your counter, and then be able to put things away, take out the trash, wipe your counter and load your dishwasher. Cleaning as you go will just annoy you! Just make sure you keep the trash can next to you!
- If you run out of something or forgot an ingredient IT IS OKAY! When I was making these meals I ran out of chili powder for one of the recipes. So what I did was write on the bag... ADD 2 TBSP CHILLI POWDER to remind myself to do it when I put it from the freezer. Then, after I toss it in the crockpot I can just add things!
- Don't forget to add your meat in last! This is so that it's the first thing to hit your crock pot because it needs the most time to freeze. For all of the recipes, all you need to do is take out the bag the night before to defrost and put it in your crockpot. Just be careful about the cooking time, I put a few hours recommendation because, based on your crock pot you may need more time to check the meat.
- Try them once before you bulk cook! If your family loves one of the recipes, then next time you freezer cook, you can just double up the recipe and split it into various bags. Let them try it first before you do this before hand though! Also try to use the suggested sides to make it awesome!

Hope your freezer cooking goes well!

-Cara Harvey

Mom Empowerment Mentor

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