



Preserve It Fresh, Preserve It Safe

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Spring Clean Your Freezer



March is National Frozen Food Month and a great reason to give your freezer a little love. You might find a few hidden surprises. A good cleaning and full defrost, if required by your appliance manufacturer, will help your equipment work more efficiently and safely.

1. Transfer food to coolers. Check each item for signs of thawing and refreezing. Discard any items that are questionable. Check food packages for signs of freezer burn.
2. Defrost the freezer. Use towels to absorb excess water and plastic tools to chip at the ice (to not damage any finishes).
3. Hand wash any removable items such as shelves and bins.
4. Once fully defrosted, clean and dry the inside.
5. Allow the unit to chill for at least 30 minutes before restocking.
6. Inventory and organize foods, in first in first out order, as you return them to the freezer.

Once you have a full inventory list from your freezer, use this list for future planning. If the freezer is quite full, “grocery shop” and meal plan from the freezer to make space for the produce you want to preserve in the coming months. If you notice you still have a lot of one item left, perhaps freeze less this year. Happy National Frozen Food Month!

Receive this newsletter electronically by signing up at extension.missouri.edu/programs/food-preservation/

Local contact information:

NORTH CENTRAL FOOD SAFETY EXTENSION NETWORK

Celebrating 10 Years



Connect During National Nutrition Month and Beyond

Every March, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, along with food and nutrition professionals nationwide, promote National Nutrition Month. The 2025 theme is “Food Connects Us.”

Food is linked to our cultural traditions and is an opportunity to share food-related experiences with friends and family. You may remember a relative preserving jams, pickles and other foods, and maybe you helped with food preservation. You may have some of their recipes.

Connecting with “historical” canning recipes usually is not good for our health and safety. Science has evolved from the time of our grandparents or great-grandparents. Earlier recipes and canning methods may not hold up to modern methods.

In the spirit of Nutrition Month, what nutritional changes can you make in preserved foods and still have a safe end product? Remember that ingredients such as salt and sugar in recipes may be part of the preservation process or they may be added for flavor. In pressure-canned

vegetables, you can safely omit the salt because it is added for flavor, not safety. In a beef jerky recipe, the salt is present for safety.

Home-canned salsa is a good example of a food with some changes you can make to personalize your recipe and connect with friends, but other changes should not be made.

In home-canned salsa, you may safely:

- Substitute sweet peppers for hot peppers to vary the heat.
- Reduce or eliminate the salt or sugar in a tested canned salsa recipe. These ingredients are present for flavor.
- Use any tomato variety or color in a tested canned salsa recipe.

In home-canned salsa, for safety, you may not:

- Thicken salsa before canning. (You can thicken after opening or strain some of the extra liquid.)
- Reduce the amount or type of acid. (The added acid such as bottled lemon juice helps the salsa stay safe.)
- Reduce the amount of tomatoes.

See the North Central Food Safety Extension Network publication, [“Play it Safe! Safe Changes and Substitutions to Tested Canning Recipes.”](#) This publication provides information for fruits, jams and jellies, meats, pickles and vegetables. Consider participating in a class from Extension to learn more about preserving food safely at home. The [NCFSEN website](#) has links to Extension agencies in 12 states.

