

## Freezer Meals

*Freezer meals are the product of a process known as “freezer cooking.” You invest some time up front to save time later. You can prepare a variety of delicious meals that will feed you or your family for two weeks to two months. Meals are prepared assembly-style, packaged, labeled and frozen.*

Venison Stew

Beef Ragu

Chicken Marsala

Chicken Noodle Soup

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Freezer Breakfast Burritos

Hawaiian Chicken

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Freezer Meal Prep Tips

## Venison Stew

### Ingredients

- 1 lb Venison Meat – chopped, Beef Stew Meat or Ground Beef
- 2 cups Carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup Parsnips, peeled and chopped (or Potatoes/Sweet Potatoes/Turnips)
- 2 large Leeks, white part sliced into half-moons (or Onions)
- 5 cups Reduced Sodium Beef Broth
- 2 tbsp Tomato Paste
- 1 tbsp Balsamic Vinegar (\*see Substitutes Below)
- 3 cloves Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Salt
- 1/4 tsp Black Pepper
- 2 Bay Leaves
- 2 tsp Thyme
- Cornstarch - optional

### Instructions

1. Add the meat to the bottom of the slow cooker along with the vegetables.
2. Pour the broth, tomato paste, vinegar and seasonings over the beef and vegetables. Stir well to combine.
3. Set the lid on the slow cooker and cook on low for 7-8 hours (or high for 3-4 hours). The beef should be fully cooked through to about 160F and the vegetables tender.
4. If a thicker broth is desired, spoon out about 1/2 cup of broth and whisk in the cornstarch. Add back to the slow cooker and cook for another 20 minutes or so to thicken.
5. Remove the bay leaves and serve topped with fresh parsley and seasonings to taste.

### For Freezer Meal:

1. Add all of the ingredients to a large bag (reserving the arrowroot starch). Freeze flat with cooking instructions.
2. Allow to fully thaw in the refrigerator before adding to a slow cooker and cooking as directed.

\*\*Balsamic Vinegar Substitute – 1 Tbsp Apple Cider Vinegar + ½ tsp Brown Sugar/Sugar or Honey

## Beef Ragu

### Ingredients

- 1 lb. Beef Chuck Roast or Ground Beef (broken up)
- 1 28 oz. can Crushed Tomatoes
- 1 6 oz. can Tomato Paste
- 1 cup Carrots, peeled and diced
- 1 cup Celery Stalks, diced
- 2 Garlic Cloves, minced
- 1 medium Onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon Italian Seasoning
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Pepper
- 1 cup of Low Sodium Beef Broth
- 1 bag/box of Pappardelle Pasta (or like shape – Rotini or Penne)

### Instructions

1. **Eat Same Day:** Season the beef with salt and pepper.
2. Add in seasoned beef, crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, carrots, celery, garlic cloves, onion, and Italian seasoning into a slow cooker.
3. Pour in the beef stock.
4. Cook on low for 6 hours (8 hours max). If you cook for longer, the beef will get mushy, so be careful!
5. Right before serving, cook the pappardelle pasta in boiling water that has been lightly salted. Cook time varies based on packaging instructions.
6. Take the beef out and shred it with two forks. Place back in the sauce.
7. Serve beef ragu on prepared pasta.

**Freezer Meal Instructions:** Add the seasoned beef, tomatoes, tomato paste, carrots, celery, garlic cloves, onion, and Italian seasoning into a gallon-size freezer bag. Make sure to defrost the meal in the refrigerator 24 hours before putting it into the slow cooker. Mix ingredients together so they are evenly distributed before turning on the slow cooker. Pour in the beef broth and follow the normal instructions from there.

## Chicken Marsala

### Ingredients

- 2 lbs Chicken Breast
- 2 1/2 cups Baby Bella Mushrooms, sliced (may use drained Canned Mushrooms)
- 1 tsp Salt
- 1/3 tsp Black Pepper
- 3 cloves Garlic, minced (3 tsp Minced Garlic)
- 1 Shallot, thinly chopped (may use onion – bit different flavor)
- 1 cup Low Sodium Chicken Broth
- 1/3 cup Low Sodium Broth or Cooking Wine
- 1 1/2 tbsp Cornstarch
- 1 tbsp Parsley, chopped

### Instructions

1. **Make the Same Day:** Add the ingredients to the slow cooker: Add the chicken breast to the bottom of the slow cooker along with the mushrooms. Season the chicken breast and mushrooms with salt, pepper, garlic, and shallot and stir to evenly coat. Pour in the chicken broth and marsala wine into the slow cooker over the chicken and mushrooms.
2. Cook the chicken: Place the lid on the slow cooker and cook on low for 4-5 hours. The chicken should read an internal temperature of 165 F.
3. Thicken the sauce and serve: Spoon out about 1/4 cup of liquid and whisk with the arrowroot starch. Pour back into the slow cooker for cook for another 15 minutes to allow the liquid to thicken. Remove the lid and top with the cooked chicken marsala with fresh parsley. Serve with a pasta of your choice like zucchini noodles or spaghetti squash.

**Freezer Meal Instructions:** Add all the ingredients (reserving the arrowroot) to a large freezer bag. Freeze flat in the freezer for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, transfer to the fridge and place it in a large container (like a casserole dish or a large bowl in case it leaks at all) to defrost. Once the meat is totally thawed, cook as directed above.

# Chicken Noodle Soup

## Ingredients

- 1 lb. boneless, skinless Chicken Breast
- 3 stalks of Celery, sliced
- 3 Carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 medium Onion, diced
- 2 Garlic Cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp Thyme
- 1 tbsp Rosemary
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 8 cups Low Sodium Chicken Broth
- 8 oz. Egg Noodles (or any pasta shape – wanting low carb can omit noodles)

## Instructions

1. **Make the Same Day:** Add the chicken, celery, carrots, onion, garlic cloves, thyme, and rosemary into the slow cooker.
2. Pour in the chicken stock.
3. Cook on high for 3-4 hours or low for 6-8 hours.
4. During the last 15 minutes, remove the chicken breast. Shred with a fork.
5. Add the chicken breast back in, as well as the egg noodles. Cook for the last 15 minutes.

**Freezer Meal Instructions:** Add the chicken, celery, carrots, onion, garlic cloves, and salt into a gallon-size freezer bag. Make sure to defrost the meal in the refrigerator 24 hours before putting it into the slow cooker. Mix ingredients together so they are evenly distributed before turning on the slow cooker. Pour in the chicken stock and follow the normal instructions of the recipe from there.

## Chicken Tacos

### Ingredients

- 1 lb. boneless, skinless Chicken Breast
- 1/4 cup Taco Seasoning
- 1 medium Onion, sliced thin
- 1 Green Bell Pepper, seeded and sliced thin
- 1 cup Low Sodium Chicken Broth

### Instructions

1. **Eat the Same Day:** Add in the chicken, onion, and bell pepper to the crockpot.
2. Sprinkle in the taco seasoning, then pour in the chicken stock.
3. Cook on high for 3-4 hours, or low for 6 hours.
4. During the last 15 minutes, take out the chicken breast and shred with a fork.
5. Place back in the crock-pot to cook for the last few minutes before serving.
6. Serve with tortillas and any other desired toppings.

**Freezer Meal Instructions:** Add the chicken, onion, bell pepper, and taco seasoning into a gallon-size freezer bag. Make sure to defrost the meal in the refrigerator 24 hours before putting it into the slow cooker. Mix ingredients together so they are evenly distributed before turning on the slow cooker. Pour in the chicken stock and follow the normal instructions from there.

# Chicken Tortilla Soup

## Ingredients

- 1 ½ lbs Chicken Breasts
- 16 oz. jar Salsa Mild or Medium (may also use Diced/Crushed Tomatoes)
- 5 cups Low Sodium Chicken Broth
- 3 Tbsp. Homemade Taco Seasoning\*
- ½ tsp. Salt to taste
- 15 oz. can Black Beans, rinsed and drained
- 15 oz can Whole Kernel Corn, drained
- 3 Tbsp. Lime Juice or Lemon Juice

## Instructions

1. **Eat the Same Day:** Place chicken breasts on the bottom of slow cooker.
2. Pour salsa and chicken broth into the **slow cooker** and make sure to pick up chicken breasts so some liquid gets underneath them.
3. Add beans, corn, seasoning, and lime juice to the slow cooker. Give liquid a good stir, cover, and cook for 6-8 hours on low or 4-6 hours on high.
4. Towards the last 30 minutes of cooking, shred the chicken. Let continue cooking for the last 30 minutes.
5. Serve chicken tortilla soup with tortilla chips, sour cream, cilantro and green onions or other favorite taco toppings. Enjoy!

**Freezer Meal Instruction:** Place all ingredients in a gallon freezer bag. Take bag out of the freezer the day before you plan to make it – pour all ingredients from bag into slow cooker and mix around. Then following above cooking instructions.

\*Homemade Taco Seasoning (for 3 Tbsp in recipe)

- 1 Tbsp. Cumin
- 1 tsp. Chili Powder
- 1 tsp. Paprika
- ¼ tsp. Garlic Powder
- ⅛ to ¼ tsp. Cayenne Pepper
- ½ tsp. Black Pepper
- 1 tsp Salt

## Freezer Breakfast Burrito

### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon Olive Oil
- 1 pound Breakfast Sausage, Bacon or Diced Low Sodium Ham
- 1 Bell Pepper, chopped
- 1 small Onion, chopped
- 12 Eggs
- ½ cup Milk
- ½ teaspoon each of Salt and Pepper
- Shredded Cheese (your choice)
- Salsa (optional)
- 10-12 Medium or Fajita sized Tortillas

### Instructions

1. In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Cook the sausage, pepper, and onion, breaking up the sausage into tiny pieces while cooking. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, salt, and pepper until combined. Heat a large non-stick frying pan over medium heat and melt a tablespoon of butter all over the pan. Add the eggs and scramble until cooked through.
3. Warm the tortillas per the package instructions. Layer 1/2 cup scrambled eggs, 1/2 cup cooked sausage, 1-2 Tbsp. shredded cheese and a little salsa on a warmed medium-sized tortilla. Fold up into a burrito.
4. Place each burrito on a baking sheet lined with wax paper and flash freeze in the freezer for at least 30 minutes. Store the burritos in a plastic freezer bag.
5. At breakfast time, place frozen burrito on a plate and cover with a cloth napkin or paper towel. Microwave for 30 seconds. Cut burrito in half and cover back up. Heat for 30-60 seconds or until warm all the way through.



## Hawaiian Chicken

### Ingredients

- 1/3 cup Low Sodium Chicken Broth
- 1/4 cup Pineapple Juice
- 1/4 cup Soy Sauce
- 2 tbsp Ketchup
- Juice of half a lime
- 2 tsp Sugar
- 2 tsp Cornstarch
- 2 cloves Garlic, minced
- 2 tsp ground Ginger
- 1 tsp Salt
- 1/4 tsp Black Pepper
- 1.5 lb Chicken Breast, cubed
- 1 cup Pineapple Chunks
- 1 Red Onion, chopped (White or Yellow Onion will work also)
- 1/2 cup Broccoli florets
- 1/2 cup shredded Carrots

### Instructions

1. **Serve the Same Day:** Add the broth, pineapple juice, soy sauce, lime juice, ketchup, cornstarch and seasonings to a bowl and whisk together until fully combined.
2. Add the chicken to the bottom on the slow cooker, placing the pineapple red onion, broccoli and carrot on top.
3. Pour the sauce over the mixture and lightly stir to coat.
4. Place the lid on the slow cooker and cook on low for 6-8 hours, or high for 3-4 hours. The chicken should read an internal temperature of 165F.
5. Serve topped with green onion and with cauliflower rice on the side if desired.

**Freezer Meal Instructions:** Add all ingredients into a gallon freezer bag – freeze flat for best storage. Place bag in refrigerator about 24 hours before cooking to allow to thaw. Then begin following cooking instructions above!

## Italian Meatballs

### Ingredients

- 1 bag frozen Italian Meatballs or See Meatball Recipe Below\*
- 1 28 oz. can Crushed Tomatoes
- 1 medium Onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon Italian Seasoning
- 1 teaspoon Garlic Powder
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Pepper
- 1 cup Low Sodium Beef Broth

### Instructions

1. **Make the Same Day:** Defrost the bag of Italian meatballs overnight or prepare homemade meatballs with recipe below – all the way through cooking.
2. Add the meatballs to the slow cooker. Add the sliced onions as well.
3. Pour in the crushed tomatoes and sprinkle on all of the seasonings. Mix until the ingredients are evenly distributed.
4. Pour in the beef stock.
5. Cook on high for 2 hours, or low for 4 hours.
6. Serve on prepared spaghetti noodles, or zucchini "zoodles," with some parmesan cheese.

**Freezer Meal Instructions:** Add the meatballs, crushed tomatoes, onion, and seasonings into a gallon-size freezer bag. Make sure to defrost the meal in the refrigerator 24 hours before putting it into the slow cooker. Mix ingredients together so they are evenly distributed before turning on the slow cooker. Pour in the beef stock and follow the cooking instructions from there.

## Mini Meatballs

### Ingredients

- 1 pound Ground Beef (any ground meat will work – pork, chicken, turkey)
- 1 Onion, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup Breadcrumbs or crushed crackers/cereal
- 1 Large Egg
- 1 tsp Mustard
- Salt and Pepper, to taste

### Instructions

1. Place all ingredients in a large bowl. Mix meatball mixture together with your hands or a spoon until all the ingredients are mixed together very well.
2. Once the mix is kneaded thoroughly, scoop out tablespoon-sized balls of meat. Cup the meat between your palms and roll it into a tight ball. Place the meatballs in a single layer on a lined baking sheet.
3. **To cook the meatballs in a skillet:** Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large skillet. Add the meatballs and cook until browned from all sides and cooked through, around 6-7 minutes. If your skillet is not large enough to fit all meatballs in a single layer, cook them in batches. **To bake the meatballs:** Preheat the oven to 425°F. Drizzle the meatballs with oil and bake them for around 10 minutes. Carefully flip them, then finish baking for another 5-10 minutes or until the meatballs are cooked all the way through.

# Jambalaya

## Ingredients

- 1 Andouille sausage, sliced
- 1 lb. frozen deveined Shrimp, thawed
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless Chicken Breast, diced
- 1 Red Bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 Onion, diced
- 2 Celery Ribs, diced
- 1 Jalapeño, seeded and diced
- 1 Garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon Cajun Seasoning (see homemade recipe below)
- 1 28 oz. can diced Tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Pepper
- 2 cups Low Sodium Chicken Broth
- 2 cups Brown rice, measured dry (may also use quinoa or riced cauliflower)

## Instructions

1. **Make the Same Day:** Place the sausage, chicken breast, bell pepper, onion, celery, jalapeño, garlic, seasoning, and crushed tomatoes into the slow cooker. Sprinkle in the salt and pepper and stir to combine. Do not add the shrimp yet!
2. Pour in the chicken stock and cook on high for 3 to 4 hours, or low from 6 to 8.
3. Add shrimp to the slow cooker during the last 30 minutes. Don't bother removing the shells yet, you can do that after.
4. After throwing in the shrimp, prepare the rice. Two cups of rice will make eight 1/2 cup servings.
5. Serve jambalaya with servings of rice, removing the shells before eating.

**Freezer Meal Instructions:** Add the sausage, chicken, bell pepper, onion, celery, jalapeño, garlic, seasoning, salt, and pepper to a gallon-size freezer bag. Add shrimp to another smaller plastic bag before putting it in, to separate it from the other ingredients.

## Made Ahead Chicken Salsa

### Ingredients

- 2 pounds Boneless Chicken Breast, cut into pieces
- 3/4 cup Salsa
- 1 15 oz can Black Beans, drained
- 1 can Corn, drained
- 1 15 oz can Petite Diced Tomatoes
- 1/2 tsp Garlic Powder
- 1/2 tsp Cumin

### Instructions

1. Add 2 pounds of cut up chicken breasts to a gallon zip top bag along with the salsa, black beans, corn, diced tomatoes, garlic powder and cumin.
2. Remove any air from the bag and squeeze it shut and seal the bag. Store the bag in the freezer lying flat.
3. When you are ready to cook your meal, simply open up the bag, dump the contents into the crock pot and discard the bag. Set the crock pot to cook on high for 4 hours or low for 8 hours.
4. Optional: If you would like, when you have 30 minutes left in the cooking time, add 1 cup of shredded cheese to top and continue cooking. You can use cheddar or a Mexican blend. If you add cheese, please adjust the point value and calorie value.

## **Save Time and Money with Freezer Meals**

Freezer meals are the product of a process known as “freezer cooking.” You invest some time up front to save time later. You can prepare a variety of delicious meals that will feed you or your family for two weeks to two months. Meals are prepared assembly-style, packaged, labeled and frozen.

- Assembly-style processing saves you time. Instead of chopping one onion for each recipe, you might chop 10 onions at one time for use in multiple recipes.
- Buying ingredients in bulk may save you money. Compare unit prices (price per ounce) on larger-sized food packages vs. smaller containers.

### **Freezer Meals give the Option to Eat More Healthful Meals**

When you have ready-to-cook (or reheat) meals in your freezer, you are less tempted to go out to eat. Meals eaten away from home often are more expensive and less nutritious than home-prepared meals. Simply remove a package from the freezer the evening before you plan to use it, thaw in the refrigerator and reheat or cook.

Even if you have a small freezer, freezer meals still can be an option for you. By freezing meals flat, you can store about two weeks’ worth of meals in a refrigerator-top freezer. After meals are frozen, you can reorganize them so they are stacked vertically like a bookshelf if your freezer allows.

### **Incorporating Pulse Foods into Freezer Meals**

Lentils, dry peas and chickpeas can be the main protein source in a freezer meal entree or can complement an animal protein such as ground beef, chicken or pork. Many freezer meal recipes pair pulses with chopped vegetables and sauces. Soups and stews are easy-to-make freezer meals. Once prepared, these entrees can be served with rice or pasta and additional vegetables or fruits to make a full meal.

## **Steps to Making Freezer Meals**

If making freezer meals is new to you, start small and gradually increase the number of meals. Try a few meals that you know your family will eat, or try out a plan for two weeks' worth of evening meals if you feel ready. The complexity and the number of recipes will determine how long preparing freezer meals will take you. As you gain more experience, you will become more efficient at preparing them.

### **Step 1: Schedule Time**

Choose the days you will be able to complete your freezer cooking session. You will need time for a partial day of shopping and several hours for preparing meals, depending on how many you choose to make.

### **Step 2: Choose Your Recipes**

Think of your family's favorite meals. Review other recipes you have found; compare nutrition. Decide on the entrées you are going to make and locate all of the recipes.

### **Step 3: Create a Monthly Menu Plan**

Be sure to have your family's schedules in front of you as you plan menus to remind you of evening events where you will be eating out. Write your entrée selections on a blank menu calendar, filling in one entrée per day, or use menu-planning software or apps.

### **Step 4: Create a Shopping List**

Be sure to have all of your recipes in front of you while creating your grocery shopping list. Once you have your completed list, cross off any ingredients you already have on hand. Make sure to note the total amount of ingredients you will need from all recipes. Don't forget to add freezer bags to your list. If you prefer, use menu-planning software or apps to generate a shopping list automatically.

### **Step 5: Scan for Deals**

Read the grocery store fliers for your favorite stores. Make note of the best meat and poultry specials; protein foods tend to be the most expensive.

### **Step 6: Shop Smart**

Using your shopping list, purchase the foods you need and store them properly prior to preparation. For example, use fresh, refrigerated meat within a couple of days of purchase.

### **Step 7: Make a Game Plan**

Gather your recipes. Group recipes with common steps, such as browning ground beef, and chopping and sautéing onions. Plan the order of your recipe preparation.

### **Step 8: Prepare Freezer Meals Efficiently**

Using a permanent marker, label freezer bags with the name of the recipe, cooking directions and date before you start cooking. The bags are easier to write on when they are empty. Another option is to print the recipe name, date and directions on mailing labels. Freezer containers can be used in place of freezer bags.

Perform all chopping, slicing, crushing and grating tasks. For example, chop all of the onions and brown all of the ground beef you need at one time. If you have special appliances, such as vegetable choppers or a food processor, use them to speed your preparation.

### **Step 9: Pack and Freeze**

Place food in meal-sized amounts in freezer bags or freezer containers. If using freezer bags, freeze the bags flat for easy stacking.