The big chill: A freezer guide

Freezing is one of the most convenient and least time-consuming methods of preserving foods. The extremely cold retards the growth of microorganisms and slows down chemical changes that affect quality or cause foods to spoil. No matter how many years food is in the freezer, it's perfectly safe to eat. In fact, it might taste just as good as the day it was frozen. However, quality largely depends on freezer storage: how food was wrapped, how fast it froze, how long it is kept, the freezer's temperature and whether the food should have been put on ice in the first place. Use this guide to learn the best ways to take your food from the freezer to table.

HOW FOOD FREEZES

When food is frozen, the water in its cells freezes and expands. Two methods are usually used:

QUIICK FREEZING

• Quick – get it fast – freeze the temperature of foods is lowered twice as quickly* within 30 minutes.
• Precip – Produces many small ice crystals, which help maintain the food's cellular structure and preserve its color, shape, flavor and texture.

SLOW FREEZING

Food is frozen within three to five hours.
• Precip – Most convenient for household freezers.
• Quick – Larger ice crystals form.ählt When food is frozen slowly, ice crystals form larger and more closely packed, which means more freezer burn for meats and poor leaching for vegetables.

PREPARATION AND PACKAGING

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