

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for May 22, 2023
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about using your freezer well, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

When it comes to food preservation, people usually have two types of stories. The first type involves the glorious benefits of canning and freezing and drying foods. The stocked shelves of favorite recipes preserving high quality produce from bumper crops in the garden. And then there is the other type. These are the stories of misfortune and disappointment. And when it comes to freezing, these are all too often related to the freezer itself.

More people freeze compared to canning. There are a variety of reasons- time, expense of containers, flavor, and texture. As we head into the summer season, let's talk about freezing and especially what to do when the freezer stops.

The standard capacity of a freezer is about 35 pounds of frozen food per cubic foot of useable space. According to Clemson Cooperative Extension, families that freeze garden produce should allow six cubic feet of freezer space per person. If other methods of food preservation are used, such as canning, then allow three cubic feet per person.

There are three types of freezers available: upright, chest, and refrigerator-freezer combination. Though less convenient, manual-defrost freezers are more cost-efficient. They also maintain higher quality food than frostless models because they don't have a fan running to remove the moisture that would turn to frost. This does mean an annual defrosting and cleaning of the freezer is required.

Here are some freezing pointers to keep in mind:

- Maintain storage temperature at 0°F or lower.
- Do not overload the freezer with unfrozen food. Start with only two to three pounds per cubic foot. You can also intersperse containers or bags throughout the freezer to ensure it has increased contact with colder objects.

- Fill the freezer to about 75-85% capacity. Read manufacturer instructions for the optimal amount. If you have considerable unfilled space, consider filling jugs about three-quarters full of water and keeping these in your freezer.
- Keep the door closed. This is especially true if the power goes out.
- Always keep a few ice cubes in a plastic freezer bag in the freezer. If the interior temperature exceeds 32°F, the cubes will melt. You can quickly determine the temperature of the water in the bag to know the current freezer temperature.

What to do when the power goes out? Completely thawed foods should not be refrozen. In general, discard foods that are above 40°F for more than 2 hours including: uncooked meat, poultry, fish, combination dishes/casseroles, soups, ice cream, and cream-filled cakes and cookies. Some exceptions that may be saved include fruit juice concentrates, vegetables, cooked meat/poultry/fish, and fruit pies. Other baked goods may be acceptable but have poor texture.

For specific information about how long to store food items in a freezer, refer to the Freezer Storage fact sheet by searching for “Freezer Storage” on Ohioline.osu.edu. You can also watch our recorded programs on over 30 food preservation topics by visiting go.osu.edu/foodpreservationrecordings. Please call me at OSU Extension with any type of food preservation or food safety question.

And now let’s look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. Each year the Ohio State University Extension Food Preservation Team offers a webinar series. This year it is called “Food Preservation Five.” This is a series of five presentations each highlighting the top five considerations for that topic. The next webinar is this Tuesday, May 23 all about Freezing. I will be co-teaching this with my colleague Chris Kendle from Tuscarawas County. This is a lunch ‘n learn type format, so I hope you can join us from 12:00-12:30 PM. Register for this free program at go.osu.edu/2023foodpreservationwebinarseries

OSU Extension is offering the ServSafe® Manager Food Safety Training course in June. Look for registration details on our website, Coshocton.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!