WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for April 1, 2024
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

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

I never cease to be amazed by the increase in frozen food displays in large and even smaller grocery stores. There are so many innovative products available. Frozen foods offer some very affordable and practical options as well. From ready-to-cook meals to ingredients and produce, frozen foods can be a way to add value to your grocery cart.

We may think that fresh vegetables are best, but frozen foods are very similar from a nutrition standpoint. Frozen foods are picked at the peak of ripeness and flash frozen, sometimes right on the field. The biggest difference is often texture. Frozen foods will never have the same crunch as a fresh fruit or vegetable. But if you are planning to cook them in a recipe, they will perform the same.

Another benefit of frozen foods is their consistent price year-round. There can be times that fresh is less expensive, but also times when it is more expensive, depending on the supply. Another benefit of frozen foods is that preparation is already done for you. There are no stalks, seeds, or rinds to remove.

The National Frozen and Refrigerated Foods Association (NFRA) has some good advice on how to deep clean your home freezer. If you can't remember the last time you cleaned and organized your freezer, then now is the time. Plan to clean and organize your freezer about once a year.

Gather freezer cleaning supplies: new sponges, clean bowls, fresh water, mild dish detergent, baking soda, absorbent towels, trash can, coolers, ice packs and a permanent marker.

Move frozen food from the freezer to coolers to keep the food cold during the cleaning process.

Unplug the freezer to manually defrost and remove any build up. For self-defrosting freezers, follow the freezer manual instructions.

Line the floor in front of the freezer with clean towels. This is to prevent slips and falls.

Remove freezer shelves and clean all interior surfaces. Use a new sponge and hot, soapy water mixed with baking soda. Dry thoroughly.

Replace shelves, plug freezer back in, and set the temperature to zero degrees Fahrenheit. Wait until the freezer reaches zero degrees before restocking.

In the meantime, inspect all frozen food and discard as indicated. Toss out anything with noticeable freezer burn (lots of ice crystals or food that looks dried out). Also look for food that is past desirable storage dates.

Sort remaining frozen foods into categories for easy meal planning. Group foods together and store in similar areas of the freezer. This includes vegetables, fruits, side dishes, main dishes, meats, breakfast items, and ice cream. We have a freezer just for meat storage, so shelves are categorized by beef, pork, lamb, goat, and poultry.

Restock frozen foods in order by the use-by date. Put older items in easier reach to be sure they are used before newer items.

Keep a permanent maker nearby. Write food contents and date on freezer-safe bags before freezing.

And now let’s see what else is new from OSU Extension. You are invited to 4-H Fun Fest next Sunday afternoon, April 7 from 2-4 PM at the Coshocton County Fairgrounds. This is a free family event open to the public. Come see what 4-H is all about!

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and empower 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!