

Words on Wellness

YOUR EXTENSION CONNECTION TO NUTRITION AND FITNESS

Frozen Food Facts

March is National Frozen Food Month! To celebrate, try these nutritious and delicious options from and helpful tips for the frozen food section:

- **Frozen Produce**—Frozen fruits and vegetables are an excellent option when purchasing out of season produce. Frozen varieties are packed with nutrients, sometimes more than fresh items, because they are packaged at the peak of harvest season. Frozen produce is a great way to save money without sacrificing flavor.
- **Frozen Meat, Poultry, Seafood**—Fresh animal protein can be expensive behind the counter, but frozen options can be just as nutritious and delicious when carefully selected. Proteins not breaded or fried are the best options. The frozen section is also a terrific place to find several meat alternatives, such as plant-based burgers or tofu meatballs.
- Check the saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar content on the Nutrition Facts Label; try to purchase products with less than 10% of the Daily Value.
- Save frozen entrées and pizzas for busy nights; add other items to these meals and snacks, such as steamed vegetables, sliced apples with nut butter, or a side salad, to increase nutrient density.

To start stocking your freezer, here is a chart with recommended storage times for common frozen food items:

Food	Storage Time in Freezer (0° or below)
Ground Meats	3–4 months
Fresh Meat (steaks, chops, roasts)	4–12 months
Fresh Poultry	9 months (pieces), 1 year (whole)
Cooked Meat or Poultry	2–6 months
Soups and Stews	2–3 months
Breaded Poultry (chicken nuggets/patties)	1–3 months
Pizza	1–2 months
Frozen Dinners or Entrées	2–3 months
Leftovers (casseroles, pasta)	2–3 months

Sources: Frozen food: Convenient and nutritious. [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](http://www.eatright.org) (www.eatright.org); McDonald, L. (2012). Freezer foods. Supermarket savvy: Aisle-by-aisle teaching modules; [Storage Times for the Refrigerator and Freezer](http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/storagetimes.html) (www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/storagetimes.html)



St. Patrick's Day Boxy (Potato Pancakes)

Serving Size: 2 pancakes | Serves: 8

Ingredients:

- 2 slices uncooked bacon, cut into small pieces
- 1 cup all-purpose baking mix
- 1 cup green onions, chopped
- 1/2 cup cheese, shredded
- 1 cup shredded hash browns
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 cup mashed potatoes
- 1 egg, lightly beaten

Instructions:

1. In a nonstick skillet, cook bacon and onions until browned. Remove from skillet, reserve 1 tablespoon bacon grease, and set aside.
2. In a large bowl stir together hash browns, potatoes, baking mix, cheese, bacon, and onions. Stir in milk and eggs until mixture is moistened.
3. Heat bacon grease in skillet over medium heat. Measure a generous 1/4 c. of potato mixture into a skillet and add three more 1/4 c. helpings into the skillet. Flatten into pancakes, and cook each side 2 minutes or until golden brown.
4. Serve and enjoy!

These pancakes freeze well once prepared. To freeze, let pancakes cool completely, put in a single layer on a baking sheet, place in the freezer, and transfer to heavy-duty freezer bags when frozen.

Nutrition Information per Serving:

161 calories, 8g total fat, 3g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 38mg cholesterol, 412mg sodium, 17g carbohydrate, 1.5g fiber, 2g sugar, 6g protein

Source: Allrecipes. [Irish potato pancakes](http://www.allrecipes.com) (www.allrecipes.com)



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Everything and the Kitchen Sink

With spring cleaning right around the corner, it's important to prioritize what needs cleaning in our homes. According to the National Sanitation Foundation, the kitchen is the dirtiest place in the household. This place where meals and snacks are prepared and served daily tends to have the most germs. The "germiest" area in the kitchen as well as the second "germiest" item in the household is the sink. This spring, clean everything and the kitchen sink to reduce germs in your home. Wash and sanitize the sides and bottom of the sink once or twice a week with disinfecting cleaner or in a solution of 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 gallon water. Clean kitchen drains and disposals every month by pouring a solution of 1 teaspoon bleach to 1 quart water down them.

Sources: Germiest items in the home. [National Sanitation Foundation](http://www.nsf.org) (www.nsf.org); Cleaning the germiest items in the home. [National Sanitation Foundation](http://www.nsf.org) (www.nsf.org)

Take a Time Out for Flexibility

While watching your favorite teams compete in March Madness, take a time out during commercial breaks to stretch. Flexibility is an overlooked component of exercise that improves your range of motion, which increases your ability to engage in all different types of physical activity. You do not need to go to yoga to improve your flexibility. The most recent physical activity recommendations suggest stretching as an easy and effective means to increase flexibility.

Follow these simple stretching tips to minimize injury and maximize flexibility benefits:

- Relax by taking a few deep breaths during stretches.
- Make smooth/slow movements instead of jerky/quick motions.
- Stretch until feeling a gentle pull; if you feel any sharp pain or discomfort, you have stretched too far.
- Hold stretches for a total of 15–30 seconds.

To get started, try these simple stretches as you wait for the basketball games to resume:

- Forward Bend—When sitting/standing, reach your hands toward your toes. Hold for 15–30 seconds.
- Wall Push—Stand 12–18 inches away from a wall; lean forward, pushing against the wall with your hands and keeping heels flat on the floor. Hold for 15 seconds; repeat 1–2 times.
- Hip Flexor Stretch—With both knees on the floor, bring one leg forward placing your foot flat on the floor and your knee at a 90-degree angle. Push your hips forward until you feel a stretch in your front thigh, near the groin. Keep your torso upright and front knee behind your toes. Hold for 20-30 seconds on each leg.

Visit the American Heart Association (www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/staying-motivated/stretchers-for-exercise-and-flexibility) for more stretches.

Sources: American Heart Association, [Stretches for exercise and flexibility](http://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/staying-motivated/stretchers-for-exercise-and-flexibility) (www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/staying-motivated/stretchers-for-exercise-and-flexibility); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [Active adults. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](http://health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/pdf/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf) (health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/pdf/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf)