

National Nutrition Month® is a nutrition education and information campaign created annually in March by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

"Go Further with Food" is the theme for 2018, and its importance is timely for many reasons. Whether it's starting the day off right with a healthy breakfast or fueling before an athletic event, the foods you choose can make a real difference. Preparing your foods to go further, by planning meals and snacks in advance can also help to reduce food loss and waste. This year's theme for National Nutrition Month® encourages us to achieve the numerous benefits healthy eating habits offer, but it also urges us to find ways to cut back on food waste. Learning how to manage food resources at home will help you "Go Further with Food", while saving both nutrients and money.

The Locals Know

New Orleanians have been doing this for ages. Sunday's ham seasons Monday's Red Beans and Rice. Protein rich, cost efficient and using, not wasting left overs. This year's National Nutrition Month

lesson really is that simple. No doubt Gumbo's origin is the same concept. Extra seafood from the weekend boil, extra game from the weekend hunt, toss it together YUM! Of course in New Orleans often health is tossed aside to welcome full flavor. However, it doesn't have to be all or nothing.

Ham is a lean protein, although a bit salty. However, if you're not adding additional salt to your beans the salt from the ham can get pretty diluted in a couple of pounds of beans. Brown rice instead of white rice offers a different flavor along with added fiber. Lastly, watch your portions and you've got a healthy meal.

This concept can be used for all your timely weekend dishes. Just google the left over ingredients and the "left-over make-over" suggestions are endless. From casseroles to muffins, simply making it look different can keep you and your family pleased throughout the week.

Snacks

All too often we get trapped into thinking we must plan specific snacks. Often we purchase prepackaged snacks for ease; however, these are not only more expensive but often not very nutritious. A snack is simply a tiny meal. A slice of

Sunday's roast with a few of the cooked vegetables from the same dish is a nutritious protein rich snack. An ounce of Friday's cooked salmon with a few whole wheat crackers = protein with fiber rich carbohydrates. These types of snacks, created from your meals, can be quickly prepackaged during the post meal clean up. This way, you achieve the ease of the prepackaged meals; however, for less money and more nutritious.

Freezing

There are times when a dish or ingredients just need to be preserved for another time in their tasty original form. At these times, freezing is an option. The below information on freezing comes from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as part of their National Nutrition Month education series:

Freezing is an effective way to make perishable items last longer. The process of freezing prevents the growth of bacteria, yeasts and molds that cause food spoilage and food poisoning. However, it is important to follow these tips to safely freeze and protect the quality of your foods.

Proper Storage Temperature and Time

Keep your freezer at or below 0°F and your food will always be safe. Only the quality may suffer with lengthy freezer storage. Built-in temperature control dials may not be accurate, so you should use a separate appliance thermometer to check the internal freezer temperature. I've attached a "Time to Toss" handout provided by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics below. Recommended storage times are for quality only because the process of freezing keeps food safe almost indefinitely.

What Can You Freeze?

You can freeze almost any item with some exceptions including canned food or eggs in shells. You can safely freeze items such as mayonnaise, cream sauce and lettuce, but the quality will suffer. Meat, poultry, seafood and other vegetables are great foods to freeze because they will maintain their quality longer than if cooked.

Packaging for the Freezer

Food items should be tightly packed in freezer bags or airtight containers. Squeeze air from bags before sealing and leave some space in containers in case foods expand. If moisture escapes, frozen food can become dry, tough and may develop "freezer burn."

To prevent moisture loss, use packaging designed for freezing including:

- "Can or freeze" glass jars
- Plastic freezing containers
- Heavyweight aluminum foil
- Plastic-coated freezer paper
- Polyethylene wrap and bags
- Freezer-safe bags

Important: Remember to label and date foods before placing in the freezer. Do not use cardboard cartons or reuse plastic containers from cottage cheese, ice cream, whipped topping, margarine, etc., since these containers were not designed to safely freeze foods.

Preventing Freezer Burn

Freezer burn is the white, dried-out patches that appear on the surface of frozen foods.

Although freezer burn won't make you sick, it makes frozen foods — such as meat and produce — tough and tasteless. Here are some tips on how to prevent freezer burn:

- Wrap freezer items in heavy freezer paper, plastic wrap, freezer bags or foil.
- Date all freezer packages and use the oldest food first.
- Make older items easier to access by placing new items toward the back of the freezer.

Monthly challenge:

Teenage Athlete- Help mom portion out small snacks created from a weekend dish.

Parents -Why not get more out of your time. If you put time into one dish, search the web to figure out how to stretch it into a few creative meals.

Keep It Cool:

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER FOOD STORAGE CHART

Properly storing foods can help maintain their quality. Make sure perishable foods never sit out of refrigeration for more than two hours, and follow the expiration dates to ensure taste and safety. If no expiration date is available on the package, the following refrigeration guidelines provide a helpful gauge. Freezing is also a smart storage option for shoppers who wish to extend the shelf life of perishable foods beyond their expiration dates. But whether you're freezing or refrigerating, one basic rule applies: When in doubt, throw it out!

Perishable Foods

Refrigerator
(below 40°F)

Freezer
(at or below 0°F)

MEAT (BEEF, PORK, VEAL, LAMB)

Steaks	3 to 5 days	6 to 12 months
Chops	3 to 5 days	4 to 6 months
Roasts	3 to 5 days	6 to 9 months
Liver, variety meats	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Cooked meat	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Ground meat		
- uncooked	1 to 2 days	4 months
- cooked	3 to 4 days	

POULTRY (CHICKEN, TURKEY)

Poultry, whole	1 to 2 days	1 year
Poultry, pieces (breasts, thighs, wings)	1 to 2 days	9 months
Giblets	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Cooked poultry	3 to 4 days	4 months
Ground poultry		
- uncooked	1 to 2 days	2 to 3 months
- cooked	3 to 4 days	3 to 4 months

HOT DOGS, LUNCH MEAT

Hot dogs		
- opened	1 week	1 to 2 months
- unopened	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
Lunch meat		
- opened	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
- unopened	2 weeks	1 to 2 months

EGGS

Fresh, in shell	3 to 5 weeks	Do not freeze
Egg whites and yolks (raw)	2 to 4 days	1 year
Egg substitutes		
- opened	3 days	Does not freeze well
- unopened	10 days	1 year

Note: All recommendations assume refrigerators are set below 40°F and freezers are set to 0°F

Perishable Foods

Refrigerator
(below 40°F)

Freezer
(at or below 0°F)

BACON, SAUSAGE

Bacon		
- opened	1 week	1 month
- unopened	2 weeks	
Sausage (meat or poultry)		
- raw	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
- pre-cooked/smoked	1 week	1 to 2 months
Summer sausage (labeled "Keep Refrigerated")		
- opened	3 weeks	1 to 2 months
- unopened	3 months	
Pepperoni, sliced	2 to 3 weeks	1 to 2 months

HAM, CORNED BEEF

Corned beef (in pouch with pickling juices)	5 to 7 days	Drained, 1 month
Fresh ham, uncooked		
- uncured	(if dated, follow "use-by" date)	6 months
- cured (cook-before-eating)	3 to 5 days	3 to 4 months
	5 to 7 days	
Ham, fully cooked, store wrapped		
- whole	1 week	
- half	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
- slices	3 to 4 days	
Ham, fully cooked, vacuum sealed		
- undated, unopened	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
- dated, unopened	Use-by date	
Ham, canned (labeled "Keep Refrigerated")		
- opened	1 week	1 to 2 months
- unopened	6 to 9 months	Do not freeze

DAIRY

Cheese, hard or processed		
- opened	3 to 4 weeks	6 months
- unopened	6 months	
Cheese, soft	1 week	6 months
Cottage/ricotta cheese	1 week	Do not freeze
Cream cheese	2 weeks	Do not freeze
Butter	1 to 3 months	6 to 9 months

