



Microwave Meals From Your Freezer

Whether you're a single senior citizen or part of a large family with children, there's nothing nicer than having a meal or two ready and waiting in your freezer. Use these defrosting tips to help get your food defrosted evenly.

Defrosting Prepared Foods:

1. When defrosting, use the oven's lower power levels for more even results. The "defrost" power level, usually about 30% power, is designed for even thawing.

2. If your microwave has only one power level, use an on-off-on-off system to defrost. Microwave on high for 1 minute per pound of food, then rest for the same amount of time, repeating until almost thawed.

3. When you are in a hurry, you can defrost on high power. But, you must check the food every minute to turn it over, stir or break it up, shield it, etc. If parts get too hot on high power, remove them from the oven if possible or shield them with foil.

4. To defrost thick blocks of soup, spaghetti sauce, etc. take the lid off the freezer container. Microwave food right in freezer container on high for 3 to 5 minutes, until it is thawed enough to remove from the container easily. Put in a heatproof container, and break it up with a fork if you can.

Continue to microwave on high power for 5 minutes at a time, until it is hot for serving. Every 5 minutes, break up the chunks or stir.

5. To heat a frozen dinner plate, cover with waxed paper. Microwave on high for 2 minutes, then rotate plate. Reduce the power and microwave on medium (50%) or defrost (30%) until the food is hot. Feel the bottom of the plate to tell how warm the food is getting. The time for each plate will vary with the amount of food.

Most commercially frozen entrees give you directions for heating the food on high power. If the food heats unevenly, reduce the power to medium (50%) and double the time given for high on the package.

6. Food packaged on shallow

(up to 1-inch high) aluminum trays can be put in your microwave right in the metal tray. Keep the tray in the center of the oven so it doesn't arc with the walls. Do not put an aluminum tray on a metal rack. Make sure you remove foil lids on these trays!

7. To defrost half a package of food, wrap the part to stay frozen in foil, and leave the rest of the package unwrapped. Set in the center of the oven and microwave on high for 2 minutes.

Try to cut off the portion you wish to use. If the block is still too frozen, repeat. As soon as you cut off the portion to be used, rewrap

the remainder and return to the freezer.

Tuck away a bag of Freezer Meatballs to use on busy days, or when you just don't feel like cooking. For a really quick meal, add them to a jar of spaghetti sauce or gravy, and serve on top of pasta!

Or, use them in the following recipe for Meatball Stew. Either way, they're quick and delicious. Be sure to freeze them loose, so you can take out just as many as you need.

Freezer Meatballs

- 3 pounds lean ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- ¼ cup dry breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup milk
- 3 eggs
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon parsley flakes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder

1. Combine all ingredients and mix well. Shape into 60 meatballs about 1¼ to 1½ inches in diameter.

2. Put half of them at a time in a double ring around a pie plate or in a 12x8-inch flat dish. Cover with

waxed paper. Microwave on high for 8 to 9 minutes, until no longer pink. (Rotate pan once if your oven cooks unevenly.) Remove cooked meatballs to a flat tray for freezing. Repeat with the remaining meatballs.

3. Freeze meatballs on flat tray; when frozen, package loose in freezer bags or containers. May be kept frozen up to 3 months.

4. To thaw: Microwave on high for 1½ minutes for 5 meatballs (3 minutes for 12 to 16 meatballs). Then add to sauce or gravy and heat.

Meatball Stew

- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 1 small onion, chopped (½ cup)
- 1 package (10-ounce) frozen mixed vegetables (2 cups)
- 12 to 16 freezer meatballs
- 3 large potatoes, peeled and cut in ½ inch cubes
- 1 jar (12 to 16 ounce) pizza sauce

1. Put butter and onion in a 2-quart casserole. Microwave on high for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring once halfway through, until onion is tender. Add frozen vegetables, cover tightly with lid or plastic wrap. Microwave on high for 4 minutes, until vegetables are thawed.

2. Add remaining ingredients (you don't have to thaw meatballs first since they are already cooked). Cover tightly and microwave on high for 10 minutes. Stir.

3. Recover and microwave on medium (50,5) for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring once after 10 minutes; until vegetables are tender. Serves 3 to 4.

NOTE: The times above are for microwaves with 650-700 watts of power. For 500-600 W, add 10-15 seconds to each minute.

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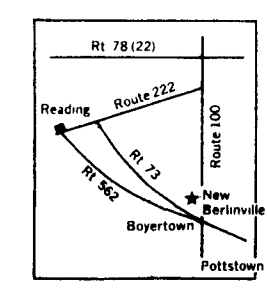
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