

HOW TO FREEZE CASSEROLES

TO PREPARE FOODS FOR FREEZING

- Freeze most casseroles before baking, especially when all the ingredients are already cooked. Exceptions to this are dishes that contain uncooked rice, raw vegetables or uncooked meat that has been frozen and thawed.
- Do not freeze mixtures containing hard-cooked egg whites, raw vegetables, mayonnaise or sour cream.
- Undercook starchy ingredients such as beans, rice and noodles as they can become mushy when frozen. Potatoes become especially soft.
- Freeze casserole toppings separately to keep them from becoming soggy. Keep a supply of plain or buttered crumbs in the freezer to use on frozen casseroles.
- Do not freeze baked pastry; add fresh or frozen *unbaked* pastry during reheating.
- Season foods lightly before freezing, then add more when reheating. Cloves, pepper, garlic and celery become stronger on freezing; onion, salt and chili powder become weaker.
- Freeze casseroles either in quantities just right for your family or in individual servings.

TO FREEZE

- Chill hot casseroles rapidly. Set pan of hot food in ice water; cool to room temperature. Wrap, label and freeze.
- When possible, use shallow baking dishes to speed freezing and thawing of casseroles.
- Allow some headspace to permit expansion of food.
- Cover casseroles with moisture-vaporproof material such as freezer paper, heavy foil, plastic wrap or a tight-fitting lid. Fix tape around the edges to make a tight seal. Label contents, number of servings and date of freezing.
- One handy way to freeze a casserole is to line the dish with heavy foil, leaving a long overhang; prepare casserole as directed. Seal foil over food; freeze. When frozen, remove wrapped casserole from dish. Label and store in the freezer. Reheat in the same casserole dish.

TO SERVE

- Use frozen casseroles within 2 or 3 months for best quality.
- The size of the frozen casserole affects baking time. Shallow dishes and smaller quantities of food require less reheating time than deeper, larger casseroles.
- To reheat casserole without thawing, bake uncovered, at 400 degrees until heated through, 1 to 2 hours for most casseroles.
- To thaw casserole before reheating, let it stand overnight in the refrigerator. Then, cook as directed in the recipe, baking an additional 15 to 30 minutes.
- If gravies or sauces separate on freezing, stirring may help return them to their original consistency.