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When the Freezer Stops Working
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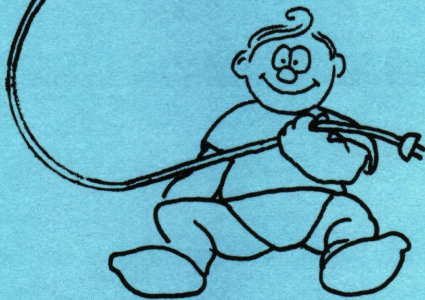
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WHEN THE FREEZER STOPS WORKING...

Coping with a non-functioning freezer can be frustrating, especially if it is packed with foods you have spent considerable time and energy growing. It is natural to want to salvage as much of the food as possible. Don't worry if the freezer can be fixed within a few hours; but if the freezer is off for sometime or a mechanical failure occurs, you can take several steps to keep the food from spoiling.

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Short Periods of Time

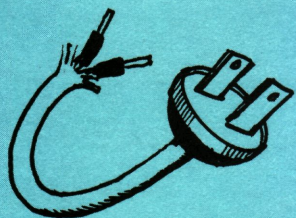
1. Keep the freezer closed. Opening the door will hasten the thawing of foods inside.
2. Cover the freezer with blankets or quilts for insulation to help hold the cold inside. For more insulation, put crumpled newspaper between the freezer cabinet and blankets. Pin the blankets away from the air vent. The air vent must be kept open since air is needed when the freezer comes back on.

Long Periods of Time

If the power does not resume within one to two days, or if the mechanical problem hasn't been found, use dry ice to keep the freezer temperatures below freezing and to prevent deterioration or spoilage of frozen foods. Dry ice may be hard to locate on short notice. Find out now where you can purchase dry ice and how much you may need.

- Use 25 pounds of dry ice in a 10 cubic foot freezer.
- Use 50 pounds of dry ice in a 20 cubic foot freezer.

Always wear gloves when handling dry ice to prevent burns. Wrap the dry ice in newspaper and place it on boards or heavy cardboard on top of the packages. Do not open the freezer again unless necessary. Dry ice should hold the freezer temperature below freezing for two to three days in a half-full freezer and three to four days in a loaded freezer.



When the freezer stops working, REMEMBER:

1. Keep the door shut and cover the freezer with blankets for insulation.
2. Use dry ice to keep the foods cold.
3. Handle thawed foods with care. Discard any that are in poor condition.

How long food will stay frozen depends on four factors:

1. **The amount of food in the freezer.** A fully loaded freezer will stay cold longer than one that is partially full.
2. **The type of frozen food.** A freezer full of meats will stay frozen longer than one packed with fruits, vegetables or baked goods.
3. **The temperature of the food.** The colder you run your freezer, the colder the food; the colder the food, the longer it will stay frozen.
4. **The insulating ability of the freezer.** A well-insulated freezer will keep food frozen longer than one with little insulation.

Use your senses to determine whether a food can safely be refrozen. Examine the food closely. Are the contents:

- thawed and at room temperature?
- thawed but at refrigerator temperature?
- partially frozen?
- frozen solid?

Does the food have:

- an off odor?
- a color change?
- apparent mold or bacteria growing on the surface?

The general rule of thumb is if a food is safe to eat, it is safe to refreeze. Foods which are still partially frozen or have thawed but are still cold to the touch can safely be refrozen. Eating quality may be slightly affected. Mark those packages which have thawed and been refrozen, and use them as soon as possible.



"I wonder where this came from?"

Refreeze Foods Quickly

If you have a great deal of food to refreeze, have a commercial food locker plant freeze it. This method will ensure that foods are refrozen quickly and solidly for minimal loss of quality.

To refreeze small amounts of food at home, set the freezer temperature control to its coldest setting. This temperature will refreeze thawed foods quickly and prevent quality loss. Arrange foods so that cold air can circulate freely around them. When all foods are solidly frozen, return the temperature setting to normal. Use refrozen foods as soon as possible.

Use the following chart as your guide to safe food handling:

FOOD

HOW TO HANDLE

Meats (other than ground)

Examine the meat carefully. Color changes or off-odors may mean spoilage. Refreeze only packages that still contain ice crystals or are cold to the touch. Repackage meats in moisture-vapor proof wrap before refreezing. Discard any meat that is at room temperature.

Ground Meats

Ground meats are particularly susceptible to spoilage due to the large amount of surface area. Immediately refreeze only those packages that are still solidly frozen. If packages are thawed but still cold to the touch, immediately cook the meat or cook and refreeze. Discard ground meat that is thawed to room temperature. Discard ground meat (frozen or thawed) that shows signs of spoilage (such as off colors or bad odors).

Cured Meats

Safely refreeze cured meats that are still cold to the touch. Discard any packages that show signs of spoilage.

Poultry

To be safely refrozen, poultry must be partially frozen and still contain ice crystals. If poultry is thawed but still cold to the touch, cook and consume immediately, or cook and refreeze. Repackage poultry in moisture-vapor proof wrap before refreezing. Discard poultry that is thawed to room temperature. If thawed poultry drippings have contaminated other foods, handle these foods as you would thawed poultry.

Fish

Do not refreeze fish unless it is still solidly frozen. If thawed fish is still cold to the touch, cook and consume immediately. Discard fish that has thawed to room temperature.

Fruits

Refreeze thawed fruits that smell and taste good. Thawed fruits may be used in cooking or making jams, jellies, and preserves.

Vegetables

Refreeze vegetables that contain ice crystals. If completely thawed but in good condition, cook vegetables and consume or cook and refreeze.

Baked Goods

Do not refreeze thawed baked goods, since the quality of the product will be poor. If the product is only partially thawed and still contains ice crystals, it may safely be refrozen even though the quality may suffer. Store thawed baked goods in the refrigerator to keep them fresh until they are consumed. Use within a few days.

Frozen Prepared Foods

Refreeze frozen prepared food only if ice crystals are still present. If foods are completely thawed but still in good condition, cook and consume immediately. Discard prepared foods that are in poor condition.

Frozen Fruit Juices

Shake the can. If the contents are totally thawed, reconstitute the juice and use. If the juice pulp is still frozen, refreeze.

Ice Cream

Do not refreeze thawed ice cream.

Cheese

Do not refreeze thawed cheese since the eating quality will be poor. Refrigerate the cheese and use as soon as possible.

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