Purchasing a freezer is an important task. We generally expect this type of item to last many, many years, so its size, shape, efficiency, security, and defrosting features are important to consider.

The size of the freezer is often the most difficulty decision. Provided you keep the space fully stocked, larger models are more efficient in respect to energy and return on your investment. **One rule of thumb is to allow six cubic feet of freezer space per person to meet the general needs of most families.** If other methods of food preservation will be used for garden produce, three cubic feet may be enough.

Keep in mind that if you will be freezing extra things, like meat, extra space will be required. The standard capacity of a freezer is about 35 pounds of frozen food per cubic foot of useable space should help you calculate extra space needed.

The type of freezer you choose will depend on available floor area and the amount of freezer space desired. There are three types of freezers on the market: upright, chest, and refrigerator-freezer combinations.

**Upright freezers** have the same general shape and appearance as home refrigerators with one or two doors and several shelves. This type of freezer is popular because of their convenience, the small floor space they require, and the ease of putting in and removing food. However, more cold air escapes each time the door is open.

**Chest freezers** require more floor area but are more economical to buy and operate. These freezers lose less cold air each time they are opened. Sliding or lift-out baskets that may be included help with easy loading and removal of food.

**Refrigerator-freezer combinations** are probably currently in all of our homes. When purchasing a new unit or before storing your frozen food in the freezer, be certain that the freezer is a true freezer that will maintain 0°F or less and not just a freezing compartment.

Other features to look for when buying a freezer include:
- Receptacle clips that prevent accidental removal of the electrical plug from the wall receptacle.
- Door locks to control entry.
- Drains for defrosting.
Stocks and soups made with vegetables and/or meat are low-acid products. They must be processed in a pressure canner to assure their safety. Use the processing time and pressure specified for each type.

Caution: USDA does not recommend adding noodles or other pasta, rice, flour, cream, milk, or other thickening agents to home canned soups or stocks.

**Vegetable Soup**

Hot Pack—Choose your favorite soup ingredients of vegetables, meat, or poultry. Prepare each vegetable as you would for a hot pack in canning. Cooked meat or poultry with the fat removed can also be added, if desired. If dried beans or peas are used, they must be rehydrated first. (For each cup of dried beans or peas add 3 cups of water, boil 2 minutes, remove from heat, soak 1 hour, heat to boiling, drain.) Combine ingredients with enough hot water or the broth from cooking meat, poultry, or tomatoes to cover. Boil 5 minutes.

Caution: Do not thicken or add milk, cream, flour, rice, noodles, or other pasta.

Add salt to taste, if desired. Fill hot jars halfway with solid mixture. Continue filling with hot liquid, leaving 1” headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process.

Process in a Dial Gauge Pressure Canner at 11 pounds pressure or in a Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner at 10 pounds pressure:

- Pints……………………………………...60 minutes
- Quarts……………………………………75 minutes

Note: Cooked seafood can also be added as part of the solid mixture, but the jars must be processed for 100 minutes for both pints and quarts.

If your altitude is about 1000 feet and you are using a weighted gauge pressure canner, process at 15 pounds pressure. If your altitude is over 2001 ft and you are using a dial gauge pressure canner, process at 12 pounds pressure.
SUPER SOUP!

Freezing is another great way to preserve your favorite soup. Unlike with canning, you can include things like pasta and rice in the soup before freezing. Soup can be frozen in any type of freezer container, including freezer bags. For smaller portions, freeze the soup in ice cube trays and store cubes in plastic bags. The recommended storage time for soup (at 0°F) is 4 to 6 months.

Tips for Preparing and Packaging for Freezing:
◊ Omit potatoes.
◊ If possible, concentrate by using less liquid.
◊ Cool quickly and package, leaving headspace in the container.

Serving Tips:
◊ Heat without thawing.
◊ Heat cream soups over boiling water. Stir cream to keep smooth.
◊ Reheat to a rolling boil, or at least to a temperature of 165°F.

Use a permanent marker to write on the container the name of the soup, date made, and, if desired, heating instructions.

FREEZING 101

Q. What kind of packaging materials should be used for freezing?
A. Packaging materials must be moisture-vapor resistant; durable and leakproof; not become brittle and crack at low temperatures; resistant to oil, grease, or water; protect foods from absorption of off-flavors or odors; easy to seal; and easy to mark. Good freezing materials include rigid containers made of aluminum, glass, plastic, tin, or heavily waxed cardboard; bags and sheets of moisture-vapor resistant wraps; and laminated papers made specifically for freezing.

Q. Can aluminum foil be used as a freezer wrap?
A. Heavy duty aluminum foil can be used as a freezer wrap. Because it can be easily torn or pierced, it is wise to use an overwrap. Light weight (household) aluminum foil is not satisfactory for home freezing.

Q. Is wax paper a suitable freezer wrap?
A. No. Wax paper is not moisture-vapor resistant.

Q. Can bread wrappers be used for freezing?
A. No. Bread wrappers are not sufficiently moisture-vapor resistant for freezing.

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Oh NUTS!

This time of year, you might be eager to find the best way to make your bounty of pecans, almonds, chestnuts, walnuts or peanuts last. While canning is a go-to for preserving, let’s not forget that some foods don’t fare so well as a canned product. USDA has never had a home canning recommendation for canning a pack of only nut meats, and the NCHFP website only has a recommendation for canning green peanuts from past work at the University of Georgia.

Nuts tend to store very well by proper drying and storing in air-tight containers in a cool location. Refrigerated (at 32-45°F) nuts will maintain quality for one year and frozen (at 0°F) nuts will maintain quality for 1, 2, or even 3 years depending on the type of nut.

While we know of no tested recommendations for canning pecan pie filling, another common request, you can easily make your pecan pies as usual, cool rapidly, and then freeze briefly before packaging for long term freezer storage (pies will be easier to wrap after freezing). Stored at 0°F, frozen pecan pies are expected to last 3-4 months.


Reliable Preservation Resources:
- 4th or 5th Edition of So Easy to Preserve
- National Center for Food Preservation website
- Recipes from Extension Services (nation-wide)

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