

Wellness Wednesday



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Healthy Frozen Foods To Stock Up On, According To Nutritionists

Stock up on these frozen ingredients and meals while you're on lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic. Good news: Pizza is on the list.

Adding frozen ingredients and premade meals (on top of canned foods and other shelf-stable goods) to your shopping list can help you keep your kitchen stocked for longer and prolong the time before the next grocery run, which is especially key in these unprecedented times during the coronavirus pandemic.

But before you fill your cart with frozen pizza rolls and ice cream (which, while definitely delicious and comforting, aren't the best choices for sustenance and keeping your immune system strong), consider stocking up on frozen versions of staple foods that may be in short supply in their fresh form and, as an added bonus, will stay good longer.

To help you get a head start on your shopping list, we asked three registered dietitians to share their favorite frozen food picks and tips for choosing nutritious premade meals. Here's what they had to say.

(Note that all three of them recommended stocking up on frozen fruits and vegetables, so pick up your favorites or buy some of their specific choices below.)

Frozen Food Buys

Berries: "I always have these on hand, especially in the winter months when they're out of season," registered dietitian Meredith Price told HuffPost. "I add them to smoothies and baked oatmeals, create homemade chia jams and top overnight oats with them. Berries are a great source of vitamin C and fiber, and the frozen berries always taste good, too!"



Fresh bananas: Registered dietitian Rebecca Ditkoff — the founder of Nutrition by RD, a nutrition coaching and consulting business in NYC — also recommended buying frozen berries, plus cherries and mango, but also fresh bananas to freeze. "I also love putting bananas that have browned in the freezer (after peeling and placing in a plastic bag), as they help to make smoothies creamier," Ditkoff said.

Edamame: Price detailed that these baby soybeans are a great source of plant-based protein and calcium. "They can be eaten as a quick snack, tossed in salads or grain bowls, or put on the side of a full meal," she said.

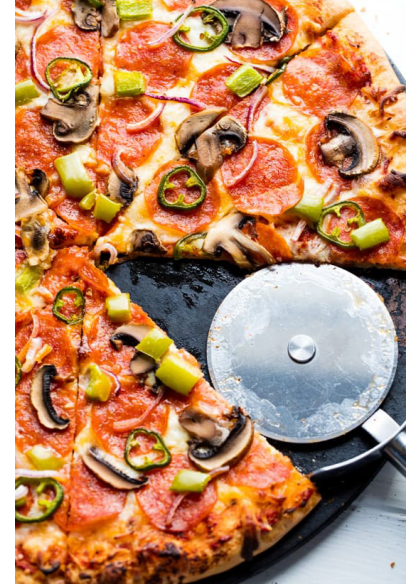
Corn: For a quick veggie side, Price tosses frozen corn into a pan with some vegan butter and a dash of salt, fresh pepper and chili flakes. "Corn gets a bad rep as being non-nutritious but it's really not true," she said. "It's a great source of fiber, potassium, vitamin A and phytochemicals, to name a few."

Precooked rice or quinoa: Ditkoff noted that these make for a convenient carbohydrate option since they're ready to eat after just a few minutes in the microwave.

Pizza: "Pizza often gets a bad rap, but when in a pinch, a frozen pizza can be a quick and convenient way to eat all macronutrients — carbs (dough), fat (sauce and oil) and protein (cheese)," Alyssa Pike, a registered dietitian and manager of nutrition communications at International Food Information Council, told HuffPost. She recommends choosing a pizza topped with vegetables or adding them on your own for an extra nutrient boost.

Meat and seafood: Pike recommended stocking up on frozen proteins since they're "a great source of B12, iron and zinc and will last long in the freezer."

Burgers (veggie, turkey, etc.): Ditkoff echoed Pike's recommendation for frozen fish like salmon, shrimp and cod, and added frozen veggie burgers and turkey burgers as additional protein options.



Waffles: "These are perfect for when I'm in a rush in the mornings," said Price, who tops her waffles with slices of fresh fruit like pears or bananas, a sprinkle of cinnamon, date syrup, and almonds or walnuts. "I also like having a side of tempeh bacon with them as well. It makes me feel like I'm having a gourmet, healthy breakfast that only took a few minutes to put together."

Tips For Buying Premade Meals

Frozen meals, while convenient, can be packed with sodium and lack nutrients like fiber, protein and healthy fats, which keep you full.

Ditkoff explained that when shopping for frozen premade meals, there are a few things to keep in mind: an adequate amount of calories and protein to serve as a satisfying meal and a minimal amount of sodium.

"When it comes to calories, some frozen meals have less than 300 calories, which would qualify more as a snack," Ditkoff said. For something more filling, "look for meals that are between 500-600 calories." Frozen meals can also be supplemented with an additional serving of protein or healthy fats, like avocado slices or nuts.

As for protein content, meals should contain roughly one-fourth to one-third of your daily requirement. "For the average sedentary man and woman, protein requirements equal 56 grams for men and 46 grams for women," Ditkoff said. With these guidelines in mind, this shakes out to about 11-15 grams of protein per meal. While you're already checking out the nutrition facts, take a peek at the fiber content, which is ideally 3-5 grams per serving, according to Ditkoff.

Sodium is often found in high amounts in frozen foods (acting as a preserver and flavor-enhancer) and something to take note of, especially for those with high blood pressure, congestive heart failure and kidney disease. Look for frozen meals that contain no more than 500-600 milligrams of sodium and to budget the rest of your meals that day accordingly.



BANANA BREAD MUFFIN IN A MUG



108 Calories | *PREP TIME: 15 mins* | *COOK TIME: 5 mins* | *TOTAL TIME: 20 mins*
YIELD: 1 Servings | *COURSE: Breakfast, Snack* | *CUISINE: American*

INGREDIENTS

1/2 very ripe banana

1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, or gluten-free flour mix

1 teaspoon sugar, optional but not needed

1/4 teaspoon baking powder

Pinch of salt

1 tsp oil of your choice, optional but not needed

Optional add ins:
mini chocolate chips, sprinkles, chopped walnuts, chopped pecans, hemp seeds, etc, (extra points)

This easy Banana Bread Muffin in a Mug recipe is perfect when you want a quick breakfast or one in minutes! A great way to use up those brown bananas!

TIP: This recipe faired well with and without oil, and both worked out great. Of course, if you want to add it, you certainly can. Just mix in olive oil or coconut oil in with the bananas.



INSTRUCTIONS



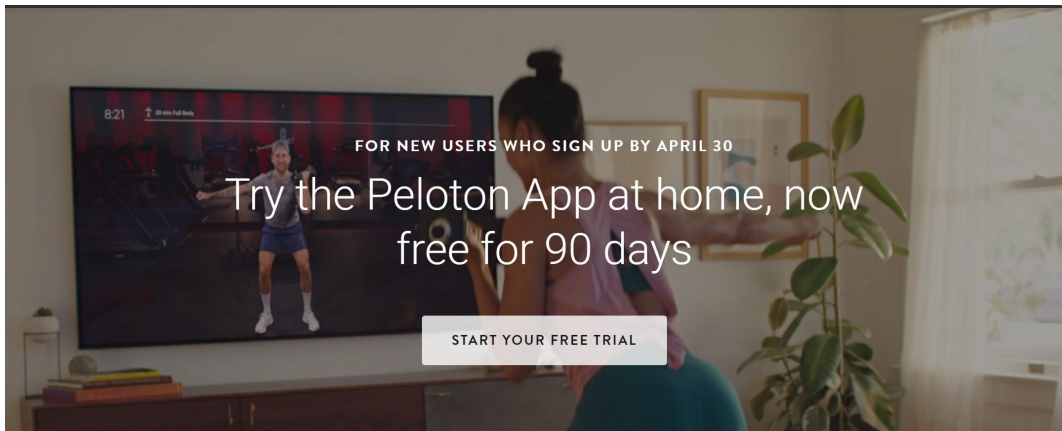
Make sure you use a microwave safe mug. Cook times may vary with each microwave, you may need to add 30 seconds depending. Play around with it. If your mug cake is not rising, make sure your baking powder is not expired. A ramekin would also work. To use a whole banana double the recipe and use a larger coffee mug. You will know when it's done when the center is no longer wet.

- 1.) Mash the banana in a small bowl and mix in oil and vanilla extract.
- 2) Put the flour, sugar (if using), baking powder and salt in a small espresso mug. Blend thoroughly with a fork.
- 3.) Add the mashed bananas, mix in any additional mix-ins like chocolate chips, nuts, etc.
- 4.) Microwave 90 seconds then let it cool about 1 minute before eating. If making a double batch in a large mug, cook 2 minutes.

FEATURED EXERCISE

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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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