



## Preparing Frozen Food Safely

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[Foodsafety.gov](http://Foodsafety.gov)



When discussing food safety in the kitchen, most people think about fresh meats and produce. But, we must also be cautious and follow rules when preparing frozen foods.

## Reading Product Label Directions

Frozen foods are convenient because they can be cooked quickly with no prep work. They are also a great option because children can easily prepare frozen meals on their own; however, it is important to read the product labels to understand how to properly prepare an item and not rely on appearance. Just because browned breading or grill marks are on a piece of chicken, does not mean it has been cooked or heated to the correct temperature.

Following these recommendations from USDA will keep you and your family safe when preparing frozen meals.

1. Inadequate handwashing is a contributing factor to all sorts of illness, including foodborne illness. It is important to follow proper handwashing steps before, during and after preparing frozen food to prevent germs from transferring from your hands to your meal.

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## Reading Product Label Directions *(continued)*

2. Although frozen products may appear to be pre-cooked or browned, they should be handled and prepared no differently than raw products and must be cooked. Frozen products may be labeled with phrases, such as “Cook and Serve”, “Ready to Cook”, or “Oven Ready” to indicate **they must be cooked**.
3. Always use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of your frozen meat and poultry products to determine whether they are safe to eat.
  - Beef, pork, lamb and veal (steaks, roasts and chops): 145°F with a three-minute rest time.
  - Ground meats (beef, pork, lamb and veal): 160°F.
  - Poultry (whole or ground): 165°F.
4. Frozen and raw produce may also carry germs that can cause foodborne illness. It is important to handle produce properly to prevent the spread of germs to your food and kitchen.
  - Even if you are preparing a cold salad, frozen produce must be cooked first.
5. Check that frozen food in your freezer has not been recalled. You can find information about recalled items and how to handle them on the USDA and FDA websites.
  - Visit [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) or the USDA’s [FoodKeeper application](#) to view all food recall information from USDA and the FDA.



It is especially important for children to know and practice the necessary food safety steps needed to prepare frozen meals to avoid foodborne illness.

Children are part of the at-risk population along with older adults, pregnant woman, and those with compromised immune systems.