



DEFROSTING FOOD GUIDE*

The purpose of thawing frozen foods thoroughly before cooking is to ensure that, during cooking the food is heated sufficiently to kill harmful bacteria.

THERE ARE THREE SAFE WAYS TO DEFROST FOOD:

- In the refrigerator
- In cold water
- In the microwave*

**Most importantly, follow instructions from manufacturer*

It's best to plan ahead for slow, safe thawing in the refrigerator. The bottom of the fridge is ideal.

For faster defrosting, place food in a leak proof plastic bag and immerse it in cold water. Change water every 30 minutes. After thawing, cook immediately.

For defrosting ready meals, always follow the instructions.

Depending on the time you have available there are two methods to defrost frozen chicken; in the fridge or in your microwave. Remember - frozen chicken; should never be defrosted at room temperature.

DEFROSTING IN YOUR FRIDGE

To defrost your frozen chicken place it at the bottom of the fridge, in a bowl large enough to catch any juices that may drip. Do not allow any of these raw meat juices to come in contact with fridge surfaces or food as this may contaminate them. If the bird has packaging or wrapping this should be kept on during the defrost process, the thawed chicken can be stored in the fridge for a couple of days before you cook it. If your chicken does not have any packaging, you should cover the bird whilst it is in the fridge.

This is the slowest method, but this is the safest method. You should plan your defrosting time for roughly five hours per pound of meat (see below).

DEFROSTING FROZEN CHICKEN USING YOUR MICROWAVE

If you are pressed for time, this method can be useful. Refer to the microwave manual as many microwaves are different and require different times to defrost a whole bird. Care needs to be taken to ensure that you do not dry out the meat when you defrost.

For chicken breasts or small pieces of chicken, ensure that the wrapping is removed before putting the meat in the microwave. Put the pieces in a microwave dish so as to catch dripping juices and, using the defrost setting, defrost two minutes at a time checking progress between each go. Once the chicken pieces have been defrosted, they should be cooked straight away.

Chicken must be properly defrosted before it is cooked. Ensure your chicken is completely defrosted by feeling for ice crystals inside the cavity of the bird. If crystals are there, the bird is not defrosted yet. You can also test thicker parts of the meat with a fork to see if it feels frozen.

HOW DO YOU DEFROST FISH

Defrosting frozen fish should be carried out overnight in the refrigerator. Do not thaw frozen fish at room temperature as this encourages bacteria growth. Once defrosted, the fish should be eaten within 48 hours.

Defrosting frozen fish is easily done but to get the best results we have some useful tips:

Thawing frozen fish fillets under water is not recommended as the flavour of the fish will be lost. The flavour of fish is salt based and these minerals will be washed away and dissolved in your water.

Defrosting frozen fish in the microwave should be avoided unless you're in a hurry and the fish has to be cooked immediately. If you use a microwave incorrectly the fish can partially cook and dry out, stop the defrost cycle while the fish is still icy but pliable.

DEFROSTING FROZEN FISH IN A FRIDGE

Fish thawed in a refrigerator can be kept refrigerated for 2 days.

Do not refreeze thawed fish. It is safe to refreeze fish once it has been cooked but some of its quality will be lost.

COOKING FROZEN FISH

HOW YOU WANT TO COOK YOUR FISH CAN DETERMINE WHETHER YOU NEED TO DEFROST

Deep frying in batter - cook from frozen

Deep frying in breadcrumbs - cook from frozen (although the breadcrumbing is more successful if done with defrosted fish)

Shallow frying - defrost first. This is mainly a safety issue: the water within the fillets will likely cause the fat/ oil to spit or sometimes the fillet can explode in parts

Grilling - cook from frozen if thin fillets /steaks (maximum 3cm) or defrost if thick fillets/steaks

Baking - cook from frozen if thin fillets/ steaks (maximum 3cm) or defrost if thick fillets/steaks

Baking in tinfoil - cook from frozen

Baking in a crust/ pastry - defrost first or the water within will cause soggy pastry

Making a stew - cook from frozen if you can safely cut the fillet to size .

THAWING FROZEN FISH IN THE FRIDGE IS THE SLOWEST BUT SAFEST METHOD

Thawing Time: 6 to 24 hours, depending on quantity. Generally, 6 to 8 hours per pound.

The temperature of the refrigerator should be maintained at 5° C or below as anything between 5° C and 63° C may allow the multiplication of bacteria.

Leave the fish wrapped and place on a plate or a tray to catch the drips as it thaws. Place in the fridge to thaw and keep away from ready-to-eat foods.

DEFROSTING FROZEN FISH IN COLD WATER

THAWING FROZEN FISH IN COLD WATER IS A FASTER WAY OF DEFROSTING FISH

Thawing Time: 1 to 2 hours per pound

This method of defrosting is faster but precautions need to be taken.

Fill a basin or bowl with enough cold tap water to cover the frozen fish. Put your fish in a sealed bag and submerge it in the water. The water should be changed every 30 minutes.

Do not use warm water, even though it will thaw the fish faster, it may also encourage the growth of bacteria to harmful levels.

Once the fish is thawed, it should be cooked immediately.

Once the fish is thawed, remove it from the sink and clean all utensils and surfaces affected during the thawing period with hot water and soap.

DEFROSTING FROZEN FISH IN A MICROWAVE

THAWING FROZEN FISH IN A MICROWAVE IS THE QUICKEST METHOD

See your manual for defrosting details

Using a microwave to defrost your frozen fish is a quick method but is not

recommended because of the difficulty in getting the different thicknesses of fish fillets to defrost evenly.

Defrosting times vary according to different microwaves and according to the form of fish (whole or pieces) you are thawing. Use the steps below for thawing in the microwave:

Place the fish on a microwave rack in a microwave safe pan.

Microwave for 1/2 the defrosting time. See time chart below. Then turn the fish pieces over. Place on the rack so the thinnest sections are towards the middle and are overlapping each other.

Finish microwaving. Pieces should still be pliable and still cool to the touch. They may be slightly icy but they will finish thawing while they stand for 5 minutes.

Note - If the individual fish pieces are frozen together, defrost in microwave just long enough to be able to separate the pieces and then follow directions above.

DO NOT DEFROST FISH AT ROOM TEMPERATURE

Always cook defrosted fish that hasn't been thawed in a refrigerator as soon as possible.

Credited British Frozen Food Federation