



BLOG

Frozen Grains

Everyone is familiar with bags of frozen peas and carrots, and we've all seen frozen seafood and poultry. But did you know that you can find grains in the freezer aisle now, too? Pre-cooked whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, wheat berries, and wild rice have all claimed space in the freezer cases to help you get a healthy dinner on the table quickly and easily.

Pre-cooked frozen grains can go directly from the freezer to the pot, or you can thaw them in the refrigerator overnight so they are defrosted when you want to start cooking. Thawed grains will keep for up to a week in the refrigerator.

You can cook with frozen grains in the microwave or on the stovetop. To microwave, place the desired amount of grains in a microwave-safe bowl and heat on high until hot. For most stovetop uses, you can just throw your grains in with other ingredients and cook them all together. If you are heating just the grains, use a saucepan, skillet or wok over medium to medium-high heat with a few drops of water sprinkled over the grains.

If you can't find the specific grain you are looking for in the supermarket's frozen foods section, you can prepare your own at home. When you have time, make an extra-large batch of your favorite grain. Let grains cool completely, spread on a cookie sheet and freeze (to keep grains separate) and then divide grains into small portions in resealable freezer bags. Be sure to squeeze out all of the extra air in the bag to avoid ice crystals and freezer burn. Frozen grains will keep their quality in the freezer for two to three months.

Here are some ideas for using frozen whole grains in your meal preparations:

- **Quinoa Scramble:** Heat quinoa in a skillet with olive oil or butter. Crack eggs over quinoa and season with salt and pepper and stir until the eggs are set. Sauté onions, garlic, peppers, or other vegetables with the quinoa, or sprinkle the scramble with shredded cheese for extra flavor.
- **Wheat Berry Salad:** Stir together 2 cups of thawed wheat berries, and any amount of chopped tomatoes, green onion, and cucumber. Whisk together $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil and 3 tablespoons vinegar with some salt and pepper, pour it over the salad and stir to combine. Try variations with chopped avocado or leftover chicken or shrimp.
- **Chicken Soup with Rice:** Sauté some onions, carrots, and celery in olive oil in a sauce pan, add a few cups of chicken broth and a scoop of frozen brown rice, and simmer until hot. Make it a southwestern soup by adding cumin seeds to your sauté and mixing in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of barbeque sauce, a handful of frozen corn, a can of black beans, and a little fresh cilantro.

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