



Ice Cube Tray Tricks

Your ice cube tray can hold a lot more than just water. In fact, it can be a great time-saver, money-saver and meal-enhancer. Here are just a few of the many uses for ice cube trays:

Tomato Paste. You open one of those little cans whenever your recipe calls for a tablespoon of tomato paste, then forget the rest in the back of your fridge. No longer. Spoon the extra into an ice cube tray, then simply pop a frozen cube into the pot as you prepare your recipes.

Caramelized Onions. Caramelizing onions right takes time—but their sweet, concentrated flavor is worth it. Make a big batch, and freeze the extras in ice cube trays, so you can add their flavor in any amount to any recipe. Roasted garlic is great saved in the freezer, too.

Leftover Wine. Just a little red wine left in the bottle? Pour it into your ice cube tray, and freeze. Then you can add small amounts of wine to any recipe without having to open a new bottle.

Pesto. At the end of the summer, you can buy huge amounts of basil at any farmer's market for just a few dollars. Make it all into pesto, and freeze the pesto in ice cube trays. Just one cube added to a stew or tossed with pasta brings the taste of summer to any dish.

Egg Whites. Sometimes recipes call for egg yolks, but not the whites. As you separate your eggs, put each white into a section of your ice cube tray. Then, when you're making a recipe that needs egg whites, you can thaw just as many as you need. (Alas, yolks don't freeze as well.)

This is only the beginning. Leftover gravy and stock could also be on your list, for instance, (though cream sauces don't freeze well.) In the summer, you can freeze tea in cubes, to chill your next glass of iced tea without diluting it. Think of your ice cube trays whenever you have a few bits of this and that on hand that may otherwise go to waste.



The tips below will help you make the most of your ice cube trays:

- Buy a few extra plastic ice cube trays, in a different color from those you use for water. Even after thorough washing, some flavors may remain in plastic and you don't want your ice cubes tasting like onions or pesto!
- As soon as your food freezes, remove cubes from the trays, put them in a freezer bag or container, and label them with the date and description. This frees up your trays for their next use, and protects your tidbits from picking up other flavors.
- If you find foods hard to remove from the trays, next time try spreading a piece of plastic wrap over the tray, and poking it down roughly into each space before you put your food in the tray. No need to line the tray perfectly; it's okay if the cubes are a bit irregular-shaped.