

Freezing Cheese

BASICALLY: HARD CHEESES ARE BEST; OTHER CHEESES LESS SO

Cheese is best stored in the refrigerator, but there are some cheeses that freeze fairly well, especially hard or semi-hard cheeses. Good choices for freezing include Cheddar, Edam, Meunster, Parmesan, Provolone, Romano, and Swiss. Some softer cheeses such as Brie and Camembert can also be frozen, although they generally don't freeze as well as hard varieties. Cheeses generally retain their flavor after freezing, but they can become crumbly and mealy and are thus harder to slice. Processed cheese slices, cream cheese, cottage cheese, and ricotta do not freeze well, although cream cheese can be blended with heavy cream and then frozen for later use in dips and icings.

To freeze cheese, cut blocks into chunks of ½ pound or smaller, wrap the pieces in plastic and put the wrapped chunks into freezer bags. Store hard cheeses (such as Cheddar or block Parmesan) and soft cheeses (such as Brie or Bel Paese) in the freezer for up to 6 months; freeze shredded cheeses (such as young Cheddar, Mozzarella and shredded Parmesan) for up to 3-4 months.

Thaw frozen cheese in the refrigerator (shredded cheese is best thawed for 24-48 hours to allow the moisture to go back into the cheese) and use it as soon as possible.

Speaking of Parmesan and Romano, save and freeze those rinds – they're great tossed into a stock or soup for a bit of extra flavor. Waste not want not!

For further information, visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP) website at <https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze/cheese.html>, see University publications such as this one from North Dakota State University at <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition/food-freezing-basics-freezing-dairy-products-eggs-and-other-foods>, or contact your local Cooperative Extension Service.

Brought to you by the UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County
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