

# Tips for Freezing Casseroles

## Preparing

- Casseroles that contain cooked ingredients should be frozen before they are baked. However, casseroles that include uncooked rice, raw vegetables, or uncooked meats that have been frozen and thawed should be baked before freezing.
- Undercook starchy ingredients (e.g., beans, rice, noodles, potatoes) that will be frozen in casseroles. This prevents them from becoming mushy.
- Freeze breadcrumbs or pastries used to top casseroles separately. This prevents them from becoming soggy.
- Lightly season casseroles before freezing, then add more when reheating (if desired). Some seasonings (e.g., cloves, pepper, garlic, celery) become stronger after freezing; other seasonings (e.g., onion, salt, chili powder) become weaker after freezing.

## Freezing

- Cool hot casseroles before freezing. To cool one rapidly, set the casserole dish into a larger dish of very cold water. Wrap, label, and freeze once cooled to room temperature.
- Consider using shallow baking dishes to expedite the freezing and thawing of casseroles.
- When filling a dish with a casserole, allow some headspace to permit expansion when it freezes.
- Cover casseroles with tight-fitting lids or wrap in freezer paper, heavy foil, or plastic wrap. Be sure to label each casserole (contents, number of servings, and date of freezing).

## Serving

- For best quality, use frozen casseroles within 2-3 months.
- Frozen casseroles can be reheated by baking uncovered at 400°F for 1-2 hours or until thoroughly heated.
- Casseroles can be thawed before baking by letting them stand in the refrigerator overnight. These should be baked 15-30 minutes longer than directed in their original recipes.
- Sauces and gravies that have separated during freezing can often be returned to their original consistencies by stirring them vigorously.