

WELLSPRING

THE HEALTH MAGAZINE FOR THE JEWISH FAMILY

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Fitbits: Are they worth the hype?

STOCKING YOUR FREEZER

SIX TOP PICKS

By Esti Asher, MS, RDN, LD

With warmer weather and summer approaching, we may find ourselves transitioning into a different schedule with more time outdoors or out of the home and less time in the kitchen. Now is an excellent time to stock your freezer, enabling you to put together wholesome, nutritious meals and save energy and prep time. If you'll be spending the summer in your vacation home, clip these ideas so you can stock up as soon as you settle in.

The following are top 6 picks of foods to stock your freezer with for maximal outcome and minimal effort.



Frozen Precooked Grains

While cooking rice or quinoa doesn't take too much time or effort, you can't compare the ease of popping a frozen, microwavable bag into the microwave to watching a pot that "never seems to boil." Having a fiber-filled whole grain rice or a protein-packed quinoa as part of a meal will help satiate your family on hectic days.



Frozen Fruit

As with frozen vegetables, there are many varieties of frozen fruit available. Stock your freezer with frozen fruit for you and your family to enjoy in smoothies, as mix-ins for yogurt, or baked into muffins. My favorites to have on hand include blueberries, mango, strawberries, and coconut.



Frozen Vegetables

The possibilities are endless when it comes to the frozen vegetables you can fill your freezer with. Think of what you and your family enjoy and stock up accordingly. Some dishes that work well with frozen vegetables include stir-fries, blended soups, and even roasted vegetables. Some of my favorite veggies to keep handy in the freezer are green beans, cauliflower, peas, and corn.



Portions of Protein

Proteins such as salmon fillets, premade hamburgers, schnitzel, and chicken nuggets can be prepped by you in advance, or more practically and conveniently, bought as frozen and ready to heat and eat from the store. Smaller or individually wrapped portions thaw more quickly and cook faster. Make sure to keep food safety in mind, especially when thawing protein. It is ideal to thaw in the refrigerator or by immersing the package in cold water.



Frozen Herbs

Frozen herbs can increase the flavor profile and nutrition level of your dish, and they're so convenient and quick to use. Keep a few types of frozen herbs in your freezer. Throw a frozen cube into a food that will be prepared with heat, or let thaw and incorporate into a dressing, pesto, or marinade. A few of my favorite frozen herbs to store in the freezer are garlic, basil, and dill.



Yogurt Pops

A more nutritious and higher-protein choice than a popsicle, a frozen yogurt pop may be the ultimate refreshing summer snack. To create these, simply freeze squeezable yogurt tubes or create your own mixture using yogurt and frozen or fresh fruit in popsicle molds. Another option is to make frozen yogurt dots by pouring a yogurt mixture into a Ziploc or piping bag (with the corner snipped off) and squeezing out dots of yogurt onto a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; once all dots are squeezed onto the sheet you can place the cookie sheet in the freezer until frozen. Try to opt for low-sugar options if possible.

Esti Asher, MS, RDN, LD, is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Self-Care Enthusiast on a mission to help women reach their ultimate health and wellbeing potential inside and out. She shares credible, clear, and inspiring nutrition information with women via her virtual private practice. To contact Esti with feedback or inquiries regarding her nutritional services, please email her at: esti@estiashernutrition.com or visit estiashernutrition.com.

Mediterranean Diet Benefits Both Mother and Baby

Preeclampsia, a complication of pregnancy, is characterized by high blood pressure and may have negative health outcomes to both mother and baby, including organ damage. While medications and general recommendations may be helpful in preventing or treating preeclampsia, new research suggests that the Mediterranean diet, which consists of many vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats (such as fish, olive oil, and nuts), may lower the risk. After all, one of the most acclaimed benefits of the Mediterranean diet is its positive impact on heart health.

A research team at Johns Hopkins University looked at data from 8,623 expectant women who were at a particularly high risk for preeclampsia, and found a 22 percent lower risk of the issue in the group that most closely followed the guidelines of a Mediterranean diet. The research team explained that the Mediterranean diet causes "less oxidative stress and better vascular function," which may be the reason why it was so helpful for lowering the risk for preeclampsia.

Soluble Fiber May Reduce Antibiotic Resistance in the Digestive Tract

When the body becomes resistant to antibiotics, untreatable infections and subsequent serious illness may occur. New data suggests a dietary intervention for reducing antibiotic resistance in the digestive tract—including up to 10 grams (a little less than half an ounce) of soluble fiber each day. Foods that contain soluble fiber include beans, avocados, barley, oats, seeds, nuts, berries, carrots, and squash, among others.

A lower level of antibiotic-resistant genes in gut microbiomes were seen when study participants regularly ate high levels of fiber and lower levels of protein. The study participants who ate a lot of soluble fiber also had a healthier gut with less inflammation. ♥