

Home-Delivered Meals: Why Use Frozen?



Many senior nutrition programs are moving away from the traditional model of delivering hot meals daily to delivering frozen meals weekly. If the idea of frozen meals conjurs up images of TV dinners from the 1960's, we are talking about something entirely different. Today's meals meet strict nutritional guidelines and are actually targeted for older adults. Here are the facts:

FACT: Frozen food has the same, if not better, nutritional value as fresh foods.

Frozen produce is not harvested until fully ripened. Fresh produce is harvested before reaching peak ripeness, so it can ripen during transportation and storage. This means nutrients do not develop to full potential. However, frozen produce is allowed to ripen before being picked. **The mature fruits and vegetables contain high levels of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.** Frozen foods are flash-frozen immediately after being harvested. This process assures there is minimal nutrient loss when processing the foods. Hot and chilled meals are subjected to light and heat during transportation and storage, causing further nutrient loss. Frozen meals can be

transported and stored without compromising nutrient content.

FACT: Maintaining the cold chain with frozen home-delivered meals is the most reliable method of assuring food safety.

Although there are multiple causes of foodborne illness, improper temperature control is a common failure point in many segments of the food service production and distribution chain. The "cold chain" process has emerged as the most reliable method of ensuring food safety. With this method, food is maintained at temperatures that prevent the growth of harmful bacteria and pathogens that are responsible for the majority of foodborne-related illnesses. **Maintaining the cold chain process from the time of production until consumed is the best way to protect seniors from foodborne illness.**

Using frozen meals also allows delivery routes, particularly in rural areas, to be extended without compromising food safety. Hot meals have a much shorter delivery window. Drivers have to ensure meals are not exposed to improper

temperatures and allowed to spend time outside of the food safety “danger zone.”

FACT: Food quality is more appealing with frozen home-delivered meals.

While it's true food held at hot temperatures keeps bacteria from growing, it's also important to point out that hot food begins to deteriorate over time, affecting appearance, aroma, flavor, and texture. **Food becomes mushy, overcooked, discolored, bitter, and dried out.** Also, nutrient loss is greater with hot meals. Frozen meals are flash-frozen immediately after being cooked, **locking in their great quality, taste, and nutrition.** Freezing also allows seasonal foods to be available year round.

FACT: Frozen home-delivered meals offer more flexibility and autonomy for the seniors.

Frozen meals are delivered to the homes 2 to 4 times per month, freeing up the senior's schedule. This allows them to select the meal they want to eat -- when they want to eat it. Daily, hot home-delivered meals require the senior to be home every day at a specific time. There is no flexibility for scheduling doctor and therapy appointments. These meals are also selected for the senior, taking away their autonomy.

Weekly deliveries of frozen meals allow nutrition programs to better utilize their resources and serve more seniors. In place of daily meal deliveries, many programs have their volunteers make social visits or phone calls to their recipients. This makes the seniors and their families feel more secure, knowing someone is regularly checking on them.

FRESH vs. FROZEN HOME DELIVERED MEALS

Which is more nutritious?

The infographic is divided into three horizontal sections. The top section, 'FARM TO TABLE', is yellow and features a green starburst with the word 'BEST'. It shows a tractor in a field and states that food going directly from farm to table is the most nutritious. The middle section, 'FROZEN MEALS', is green and features a yellow starburst with the word 'BETTER'. It shows a hand holding a plant, a GA Foods delivery van, and a person delivering to a freezer. It explains that freezing locks in nutrients and that specially designed trucks keep meals frozen in transport. The bottom section, 'FRESH CHILLED', is grey and features a red octagonal sign with the words 'NOT SO GOOD'. It shows a house, a truck, and a cooler. It explains that light and heat during transport cause nutrient loss, chilling does not protect from further deterioration, and heavy boxes are exposed to food safety concerns.

FARM TO TABLE
BEST
Food that goes from the FARM directly to your TABLE is the most nutritious!

FROZEN MEALS
BETTER
The quick-freeze process LOCKS in the high levels of nutrients. This is true for both meats and produce.
Frozen produce is harvested at peak ripeness and contains HIGH LEVELS of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.
SPECIALLY DESIGNED DELIVERY TRUCKS keep meals frozen in transport so nutrients and food safety are not compromised.
GA Foods delivers meals DIRECTLY TO YOUR FREEZER, ensuring the nutrient integrity from harvest to your home.

FRESH CHILLED
NOT SO GOOD
Light and heat during transportation and storage causes more nutrient loss.
Chilling foods DOES NOT protect from further nutrient deterioration.
Shipped using FedEx or UPS in HOT trucks.
Produce that is picked before peak ripeness, DOES NOT allow nutrients to develop to full potential.
Heavy boxes of food dropped off at your door are exposed to food safety concerns and further nutrient compromise, even if placed in cooler.

Why GA Foods Uses the Cold Chain Process

The cold chain is a temperature-controlled supply chain that ensures perishable foods are maintained at safe temperatures from the time of production until consumed. The cold chain allows manufacturers to transport perishable foods **without using harmful preservatives and additives.** A break in the cold chain allows bacteria to multiply quickly. If ingested, it can lead to food poisoning.