

Pantry-to-Freezer Dinner Kits

12 matched kits that turn a dry mix and freezer staples into dinner for four

12 complete dinners · US measurements · Printable recipe cards

12

A companion to The Ultimate Dry Mix Pantry Cookbook

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A little preparation. A calmer dinner.

A jar of dry mix is only half of dinner when the chicken, vegetables or cheese still need to be found and prepared. These twelve kits pair a pantry jar with measured freezer companions. Keep the pieces apart until their cooking step, then bring them together in one skillet or saucepan.

Each kit serves four and is built around a recipe from The Ultimate Dry Mix Pantry Cookbook. The ingredient amounts and cooking methods are included here, with extra directions for packing, freezing and thawing. Book recipe numbers make it easy to return to the original.

Choose two or three kits your household already likes. Pack them while putting away groceries, and move the next kit to the refrigerator before the day you want to cook it. The time printed on each card is dinner-day preparation, cooking and resting after thawing; freezer preparation and thawing are additional.

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Set yourself up well.

01 Label the dry jar and every freezer bag with the same kit name and recipe number. Add the packing date and note whether a meat portion is raw or already cooked. Keep freezer bags in a larger outer bag if that makes the matched pieces easier to find.

02 Use a clean, completely dry jar large enough to hold the listed mix. Stir the dry ingredients evenly before sealing, and use the whole jar for one dinner. For the teriyaki kit, seal the sauce ingredients in a separate food-safe packet. Keep all meat, vegetables, cheese and other moist ingredients out of the pantry jar.

03 Use freezer-rated bags or containers, press excess air out, and freeze bags flat. Measure commercially frozen vegetables promptly and return them to the freezer while still frozen. Follow the packing directions on each card for any fresh vegetables.

04 Keep unopened cans, cartons, oil and shelf-stable condiments in the pantry. Refrigerate leftovers from opened containers according to the package. Butter, shredded cheese and measured citrus juice have their own freezer portions, so you do not need to buy a fresh finishing ingredient just for one kit.

05 Dry-mix storage depends on the earliest relevant ingredient date and storage instructions; repacking does not extend shelf life. Keep jars cool, dry and airtight. Check allergen labels on broth, noodles, tortillas, sauces and other packaged ingredients.

Store, thaw & serve.

Keep the refrigerator at 40°F or below and the freezer at 0°F or below. Freeze ingredients while they are fresh, and follow any shorter storage instructions on their packages.

Thaw kits in the refrigerator, not on the counter. A flat meat pack may need about a day, and thicker packs can take longer; the food must be fully thawed before these cooking directions begin. Keep raw meat in a rimmed container below other food, and cook thawed raw ground meat or poultry within 1-2 days.

For freshly cooked chicken, divide it into shallow containers and refrigerate promptly, within 2 hours of cooking, or 1 hour above 90°F. Freeze measured portions once chilled. Do not leave a large hot batch on the counter to cool.

Cook raw ground beef or pork to at least 160°F. Cook chicken and reheat previously cooked food to 165°F, checking with a food thermometer. A printed cooking time is a guide; continue cooking until the food reaches its required temperature and the grain or pasta is tender.

Refrigerate leftover meals promptly in shallow containers within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Use refrigerated leftovers within 3-4 days and reheat to 165°F.

Freezing changes texture. These kits use vegetables in cooked dishes and shredded cheese for melting. After thawing, keep the components chilled until cooking and discard food with damaged packaging or an unsafe temperature history.

A note for your kitchen

Use the ingredient types and quantities listed on each card. Check package labels, use clean equipment, and follow the cooking method through to its texture and temperature checks. Keep the recipe with its matching kit.

01 Chicken Noodle Soup Kit

Based on book recipe 86: Chicken Noodle Soup Mix (page 52).

4 servings | 25-30 minutes after thawing

Dry jar

4 oz small dry egg noodles

2 tbsp dried minced onion

1 tsp dried parsley

½ tsp dried thyme

¼ tsp black pepper

Freezer companions

Bag A: 2 cups fully cooked shredded chicken, chilled before packing.

Bag B: 1 cup thinly sliced carrots and 1 cup sliced celery, prepared as directed below.

Keep beside the jar

6 cups low-sodium chicken broth; keep a little extra available if the noodles absorb more liquid.

Pack & thaw

Blanch the sliced carrots in boiling water for 2 minutes and the celery separately for 3 minutes. Cool each immediately in ice water, then drain very well. Pack the cold vegetables together.

Freeze the chicken and vegetables in separate sealed bags under the same kit number. Thaw both in the refrigerator before cooking.

Make dinner

1. Bring the broth, thawed carrots and celery to a boil in a large saucepan. Reduce to a simmer for 5 minutes.

2. Add the entire dry jar. Cook at a gentle boil for the noodle package time, stirring occasionally.

3. Stir in the thawed chicken for the last 3-5 minutes, then continue until the soup reaches 165°F. Add extra broth if needed and divide among four bowls.

02 Chili Soup Kit

Based on book recipe 97: Chili Soup Mix (page 58).

4 servings | 35-40 minutes after thawing

Dry jar

1 tbsp chili powder

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tbsp dried minced onion

½ tsp dried oregano

¼ tsp garlic powder

Freezer companions

One sealed bag: 1 lb raw ground beef, pressed into a thin, even layer.

Keep beside the jar

One 15-oz can kidney beans, drained when cooking.

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, with their juices.

3 cups low-sodium beef broth.

Pack & thaw

Pack the raw beef by itself in a leakproof freezer bag. Place it inside a second bag if needed to protect other food.

Thaw the beef in a rimmed container on the lowest refrigerator shelf. Keep the beans, tomatoes and broth unopened in the pantry until cooking.

Make dinner

1. Empty the whole dry jar into a small bowl and stir the seasonings together. Brown the thawed beef in a large saucepan, breaking it into small crumbles. Drain excess fat.

2. Add the seasoning mix, drained beans, tomatoes with their juices and broth. Bring to a simmer and cook gently for 20 minutes.

3. Check that the beef reaches at least 160°F. Mash a few beans against the side of the pan if you want a thicker soup, then divide among four bowls.

03 Southwestern Bean Soup Kit

Based on book recipe 106: Southwestern Bean Soup Mix (page 62).

4 servings | 30-35 minutes after thawing

Dry jar

2 tbsp dried minced onion

2 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp chili powder

½ tsp smoked paprika

¼ tsp garlic powder

Freezer companions

Bag A: 1 cup commercially frozen corn.

Small freezer container: 1 tbsp lime juice.

Bag B: 8 small tortillas, separated with parchment if desired.

Keep beside the jar

Two 15-oz cans pinto beans, drained when cooking.

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, with their juices.

4 cups low-sodium broth.

Pack & thaw

Portion the corn while it is still frozen. Freeze the measured lime juice separately so it can be stirred in at the end.

Keep the corn frozen until cooking. Thaw the lime-juice portion and tortillas in the refrigerator. The unopened beans, tomatoes and broth stay beside the dry jar.

Make dinner

1. Stir the whole jar of seasoning into the broth in a large saucepan. Add the tomatoes with their juices and the drained beans.

2. Bring to a simmer and cook gently for 15 minutes. Mash about 1/2 cup of the beans against the side of the pot to give the soup body.

3. Add the frozen corn and simmer for at least 5 minutes, or for the package cooking time if longer. Warm the tortillas according to their package directions. Stir the lime juice into the soup and serve with two tortillas per person.

04 Taco Rice Skillet Kit

Based on book recipe 111: Taco Rice Skillet Mix (page 65).

4 servings | 40-45 minutes after thawing, including rest

Dry jar

1 cup long-grain white rice

1 tbsp dried minced onion

2 tsp chili powder

1 tsp ground cumin

½ tsp garlic powder

Freezer companions

Bag A: 1 lb raw ground beef, packed separately.

Bag B: 1 cup commercially frozen corn.

Bag C: 1/2 cup shredded cheddar.

Keep beside the jar

1 3/4 cups low-sodium beef broth.

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, drained when cooking.

Up to 1/4 cup hot water if the rice needs more cooking.

Pack & thaw

Freeze the beef, corn and cheese in their own labeled bags. Keep the raw-beef bag isolated from the ready-to-use ingredients.

Thaw the beef and cheese in the refrigerator. Keep the corn frozen until the recipe calls for it.

Make dinner

1. Brown the thawed beef in a deep skillet, breaking it into crumbles. Drain excess fat.

2. Add the entire dry jar, broth and drained tomatoes. Bring to a simmer, cover tightly and cook on low for 18-22 minutes.

3. Add the corn, cover and cook about 5 minutes more, or as directed on the corn package if longer. The beef must reach 160°F and the rice must be tender. If the rice remains firm, add up to 1/4 cup hot water, cover and continue cooking.

4. Turn off the heat, scatter the cheddar over the top and rest, covered, for 5 minutes before serving.

05 Chili Mac Kit

Based on book recipe 113: Chili Mac Mix (page 66).

4 servings | 35-41 minutes after thawing, including rest

Dry jar

8 oz elbow macaroni

1 tbsp chili powder

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tbsp dried minced onion

½ tsp dried oregano

Freezer companions

One sealed bag: 1 lb raw ground beef, flattened for easier thawing.

Keep beside the jar

One 15-oz can kidney beans, drained when cooking.

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, with their juices.

2 1/2 cups low-sodium beef broth.

A little hot water, only if needed as the pasta cooks.

Pack & thaw

Seal the raw beef in its own freezer bag and label it with the matching jar number. The macaroni stays dry in the pantry.

Thaw the beef fully in a rimmed container in the refrigerator before making dinner.

Make dinner

1. Brown the thawed beef in a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven, breaking up the clumps. Drain excess fat.

2. Stir in the entire dry jar, drained kidney beans, tomatoes with their juices and broth. Bring to a gentle boil.

3. Cook uncovered for 14-18 minutes, stirring frequently, until the macaroni is tender and the beef reaches at least 160°F. Add hot water a splash at a time if the pan becomes dry before the pasta is done.

4. Remove from the heat and let stand for 3 minutes to thicken.

06 Chicken & Rice Dinner Kit

Based on book recipe 118: Chicken Rice Dinner Mix (page 68).

4 servings | 40-45 minutes after thawing, including rest

Dry jar

1 cup long-grain white rice

1 tbsp dried minced onion

½ tsp dried thyme

¼ tsp garlic powder

¼ tsp black pepper

Freezer companions

Bag A: 2 cups fully cooked diced chicken, chilled before packing.

Bag B: 1 1/2 cups commercially frozen peas and carrots.

Small wrapped portion: 1 tbsp butter.

Keep beside the jar

1 3/4 cups low-sodium chicken broth.

Up to 1/4 cup extra hot broth if the rice remains firm.

Pack & thaw

Pack the cold cooked chicken separately from the vegetables. Wrap the butter tightly and tuck it into the outer kit bag.

Thaw all three portions in the refrigerator. Drain excess water from the vegetables; the recipe uses thawed vegetables so the rice can finish evenly.

Make dinner

1. Bring the broth and butter to a boil in a deep skillet. Stir in the entire dry jar, cover tightly and cook over low heat for 18-20 minutes.

2. Scatter the thawed chicken and vegetables over the rice. Cover and cook for 5-8 minutes more, or until the center of the dish reaches 165°F.

3. If the rice is still firm, pour in up to 1/4 cup hot broth, cover and continue cooking on low until tender. Remove from the heat and rest, covered, for 5 minutes, then fold together gently.

07 Dirty Rice Dinner Kit

Based on book recipe 120: Dirty Rice Mix (page 69).

4 servings | 48-53 minutes after thawing, including rest

Dry jar

1 cup long-grain white rice

1 tsp paprika

½ tsp dried thyme

½ tsp garlic powder

¼ tsp black pepper

⅛ tsp cayenne

Freezer companions

Bag A: 1 lb raw ground pork, packed separately.

Bag B: 1/2 cup finely diced onion, 1/2 cup finely diced celery and 1/2 cup finely diced bell pepper.

Keep beside the jar

1 3/4 cups low-sodium chicken broth.

A little hot water if the rice needs longer to cook.

Pack & thaw

For the vegetable bag, use plain commercially frozen diced onion and bell pepper, or wash, dice and dry fresh ones. Blanch fresh diced celery for 3 minutes, chill in ice water and drain well before adding it.

Freeze the vegetables separately from the raw pork. Thaw both bags in the refrigerator; drain excess vegetable moisture before cooking.

Make dinner

1. Brown the thawed pork with the onion, celery and pepper in a deep skillet, breaking the meat into fine crumbles. Drain excess fat.

2. Stir in the entire dry jar and broth. Bring to a simmer, cover tightly and cook on low for 20-25 minutes, until the rice is tender and the pork reaches at least 160°F.

3. If needed, add a splash of hot water, replace the lid and cook until the rice is done. Remove from the heat and rest, covered, for 5 minutes before fluffing.

08 Taco Bean & Tortilla Kit

Based on book recipe 125: Taco Bean Skillet Mix (page 72).

4 servings | 25-30 minutes after thawing

Dry jar

2 tbsp dried minced onion

2 tsp chili powder

1 tsp ground cumin

½ tsp garlic powder

½ tsp dried oregano

Freezer companions

Bag A: 1 cup commercially frozen corn.

Bag B: 3/4 cup shredded cheddar.

Bag C: 8 small tortillas, separated with parchment if desired.

Keep beside the jar

Two 15-oz cans pinto beans, drained when cooking.

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, with their juices.

1/2 cup water.

Pack & thaw

Freeze the corn, cheese and tortillas in separate bags so each can be added at the right stage.

Thaw the cheese and tortillas in the refrigerator. Keep the corn frozen until cooking. Warm the tortillas according to their package directions while the skillet simmers.

Make dinner

1. Combine the drained beans, tomatoes with their juices, frozen corn, water and the entire seasoning jar in a deep skillet.

2. Bring to a simmer and cook uncovered for 12-15 minutes, stirring and mashing a few beans to thicken the sauce. Make sure the corn has cooked for at least the time printed on its package.

3. Scatter the cheddar over the top, remove from the heat and cover for 3 minutes. Serve with the eight warm tortillas, two per person.

09 Smoked Sausage Jambalaya Kit

Based on book recipe 128: Pantry Jambalaya Mix (page 73).

4 servings | 45-50 minutes after thawing, including rest

Dry jar

1 cup long-grain white rice

1 tsp paprika

½ tsp dried thyme

½ tsp dried oregano

½ tsp garlic powder

⅛ tsp cayenne

Freezer companions

Bag A: 12 oz fully cooked smoked sausage, sliced.

Bag B: 1 bell pepper, diced, and 1 cup diced celery.

Keep beside the jar

1 3/4 cups low-sodium chicken broth.

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, drained when cooking.

Up to 1/4 cup extra hot broth if the rice remains firm.

Pack & thaw

Wash, seed and dice the pepper. Blanch the diced celery for 3 minutes, cool it immediately in ice water and drain well. Freeze the vegetables in one bag and the fully cooked sausage in another.

Thaw both bags in the refrigerator before cooking. Drain excess vegetable moisture. Confirm the sausage package says fully cooked.

Make dinner

1. Brown the thawed sausage, pepper and celery in a deep skillet for about 5 minutes.

2. Add the entire dry jar, broth and drained tomatoes. Bring to a simmer, cover tightly and cook on low for 20-25 minutes.

3. If the rice remains firm, add up to 1/4 cup hot broth and continue cooking, covered, until tender. Check that the dish reaches 165°F, then remove from the heat and rest, covered, for 5 minutes.

10 Pizza Pasta Skillet Kit

Based on book recipe 134: Pizza Pasta Mix (page 76).

4 servings | 28-33 minutes after thawing

Dry jar

8 oz short dry pasta

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp dried basil

½ tsp garlic powder

¼ tsp black pepper

Freezer companions

Bag A: 1 bell pepper, seeded and diced.

Bag B: 1/2 cup sliced ready-to-eat pepperoni.

Bag C: 1 cup shredded low-moisture mozzarella.

Keep beside the jar

2 1/2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth.

One 15-oz can tomato sauce.

A little water if the pasta needs more liquid.

Pack & thaw

Wash and dry the pepper before dicing. Freeze it separately from the pepperoni and mozzarella. Shredded low-moisture mozzarella is intended to melt into the dish; fresh mozzarella is not the same ingredient.

Thaw all portions in the refrigerator. Drain any liquid from the peppers before adding them to the skillet.

Make dinner

1. Combine the broth, tomato sauce, thawed pepper and entire dry jar in a deep skillet. Bring to a simmer.

2. Cook uncovered for 12-16 minutes, stirring often, until the pasta is tender. Add water a splash at a time if needed.

3. Stir in the pepperoni and heat through for about 2 minutes. Remove from the heat, scatter the mozzarella over the top and cover until melted, about 3 minutes.

11 Black Bean & Corn Rice Kit

Based on book recipe 139: Black Bean Rice Mix (page 79).

4 servings | 40-45 minutes after thawing, including rest

Dry jar

1 cup long-grain white rice

1 tbsp dried minced onion

1 tsp ground cumin

½ tsp dried oregano

¼ tsp garlic powder

Freezer companions

Bag A: 1 cup commercially frozen corn.

Small freezer container: 1 tbsp lime juice.

Keep beside the jar

1 3/4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth.

1 tbsp olive oil.

Two 15-oz cans black beans, drained when cooking.

A little hot water if the rice needs more cooking.

Pack & thaw

Portion the corn while frozen and freeze the measured lime juice separately. The beans stay unopened in the pantry.

Thaw the corn and lime juice in the refrigerator. Drain excess water from the corn before cooking.

Make dinner

1. Bring the broth and oil to a boil in a deep skillet. Stir in the entire dry jar, cover tightly and simmer on low for 18-20 minutes.

2. Place the drained beans and thawed corn on top. Cover and cook for 5-8 minutes more, until the beans are hot and the rice is tender; respect the corn package cooking time if longer. If the rice remains firm, add a little hot water and continue covered.

3. Remove from the heat and rest, covered, for 5 minutes. Fold in the lime juice and fluff gently before serving.

12 Chicken Teriyaki Rice Bowl Kit

Based on book recipe 175: Teriyaki Rice Bowl Mix (page 97).

4 servings | 45-50 minutes after thawing, including rice rest

Dry jar

Rice jar: 1 cup long-grain white rice.

Separate sauce packet: 1/2 tsp ground ginger, 1/2 tsp garlic powder, 1 tbsp brown sugar and 1 tbsp cornstarch.

Freezer companions

Bag A: 1 lb raw boneless chicken, cut into 1-inch pieces, sealed by itself.

Bag B: 3 cups plain commercially frozen small broccoli florets.

Keep beside the jar

1 3/4 cups water for the rice.

1 tbsp oil.

1/4 cup reduced-sodium soy sauce.

3/4 cup cold water for the sauce.

1 tbsp rice vinegar.

2 tbsp water for steaming the broccoli.

Pack & thaw

Keep the raw chicken separate from the broccoli. Freeze the two bags under the same kit number.

Thaw both bags in the refrigerator and drain the broccoli. This kit uses thawed commercially frozen broccoli in place of fresh; the finished florets will be softer. Keep the dry sauce packet separate from the rice.

Make dinner

1. Bring the rice and 1 3/4 cups water to a boil in a saucepan. Cover, lower the heat and cook for 18-20 minutes until tender. Remove from the heat and rest, covered, for 5 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a skillet and brown the thawed chicken on all sides. Add the drained broccoli and 2 tbsp water. Cover and steam for 4-5 minutes, or for the broccoli package cooking time if longer.

3. Whisk the dry sauce packet with the soy sauce, 3/4 cup cold water and vinegar. Pour into the skillet and simmer for 2-3 minutes until thickened. Check several of the largest chicken pieces: they must reach 165°F; continue cooking if needed. Serve over the rice.

Helpful references.

Food-handling guidance draws on the sources below. Recipe-specific ingredient choices and cooking instructions appear on each card.

USDA FSIS: How do you thaw food safely?

USDA FSIS: How long can I keep meat in the refrigerator?

USDA FSIS: How do I handle leftovers safely?

FoodSafety.gov: Safe minimum internal temperatures

NCHFP: Freezing carrots

NCHFP: Blanching vegetables

University of California Master Food Preservers: Freezing cheese

NCHFP: Freezing diced onions

NCHFP: Freezing bell or sweet peppers

NCHFP: Thawing and preparing foods for serving

Your original cookbook

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