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For Better Living  
Selecting Frozen Meals

Have you thought about where tonight's dinner will come from? Will it be the grocery store frozen food section, the deli section or maybe even the fast food drive thru? With today's busy schedules and very little time for cooking meals "from scratch," these are choices many Americans are making each evening.

If you choose a packaged meal from the grocery store's frozen food section, the options are plentiful. Once called "TV Dinners", they have evolved into a wide range of modern meals that are quick, easy, and often quite attractive. The variety of options can make a family meal that appeals to each person's tastes - from beef, chicken and pork to pasta, vegetarian meals, "hot pockets," and oriental "bowls." Heating these in the microwave helps keep the kitchen clean, too.

Many frozen meals are controlled in calories, fat and sodium. Often, they are less expensive than getting other forms of take-out meals.

Keep the following nutritional considerations in mind as you select frozen dinners:

- \* Look for meals that include a lot of vegetables. Check the ingredients list to see if they are among the first few items listed.
- \* Read the nutrition label and compare different brands of the same type of food. Be sure to look at the amount of sodium and saturated fats in the selections. Look for meals with no more than 800 milligrams of sodium and 10 - 13 grams of fat. Also, look for a meal with approximately 300 - 400 calories.
- \* Some meals may not be filling. You may want to consider adding some packaged tossed salad, a cup of soup, piece of fruit, some leftover vegetables, or a whole-grain roll to the meal. These additions will provide extra vitamins, minerals and fiber without a lot of extra calories to help you feel full.
- \* Match the portion size to your activity level. "Man-size" meals contain more calories, which require most people to maintain a higher level of activity to maintain a reasonable weight.
- \* Another option is to make up your own frozen meals from home-cooked leftovers. Recycle the dishes or trays you get from the pre-packaged frozen meals you've purchased. Fill them with a selection of your favorite foods, wrap each tray in a freezer bag, and have them on hand in your freezer for the next time you run out of time to cook a full meal. This is probably the least expensive way of having frozen meals in the freezer. Also, you won't have to stop at the grocery store, further saving you time in preparing dinner. The next time you cook a meal, prepare extra so that you'll have enough to make up these frozen meals. Instead of thinking of these meals as leftovers, consider them as "planned-overs".

Source: Colorado Cooperative Extension

## **Lemon Drop Cookies**

2 eggs  
1 cup sugar  
2 teaspoons grated lemon peel  
2 teaspoons lemon extract  
1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder

### **Glaze:**

1 1/2 cups confectioner's sugar  
1 to 2 tablespoons lemon juice

In a small mixing bowl, beat eggs until frothy. Beat in the sugar, lemon peel and extract. Combine flour and baking powder. Gradually add to sugar mixture.

Drop by teaspoonfuls 2 inches apart onto baking sheets coated with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 325 degrees for 10-12 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool completely on baking sheets before removing.

For glaze, in a small bowl, combine confectioner's sugar and enough of the lemon juice to achieve desired consistency. Drizzle over the cookies.