



ONCE A MONTH
·meals·
—

The Once A Month Meals

SECRET HANDBOOK

Your guide to surviving your first freezer cooking day.

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Hi friends!

Welcome to Once A Month Meals!

We're so excited that you are **making time for what matters most.**

Freezer cooking means more time with the people you love. Healthier meals, even when you are busy. You do the work once a month, twice a month, or every couple of weeks so that you have space in your day to rest and enjoy life. It isn't your average meal plan - it is a meal plan that's **reality proof!**

Speaking of reality, we know that gearing up to freezer cook can be somewhat daunting. Maybe you are the type that dives into a project headfirst, or maybe you read all of the instructions before you ever pick up a cooking spoon. No matter the type or experience, we're here to help!

Whether you are standing in a kitchen full of food about to give up, or still sitting at your computer wondering what you got yourself into - we have been there! Read this guide from cover to cover or consult it in emergencies as needed - whatever works for your personality - but, make sure you **read it!** We put all of our resources and experiences here in one place so you can have **SUCCESS!**

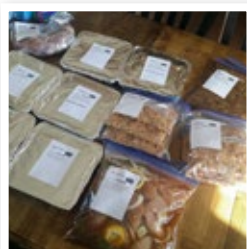
You can do this! And we will be here to help.

Best wishes on the journey, and happy cooking!

Your friends at Once a Month Meals



Share your journey with us! | #onceamonthmeals #oamm



Member, @adrigraves5



Member, @hgreener



Member, @kbraz89

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Frequently Asked Questions

Click the question to be taken to the answer!



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PLAN *Your Menu*



Prepare for Success!

Set Yourself Up to Succeed

We will not lie to you. Freezer cooking is not a stroll in the park. It is a marathon. But the finish line is SO worth it. That said, you need to make some preparations before you pump your fists and head to the grocery store.

How to Choose a Menu

You do not have to run the full marathon your first day! In fact, we recommend you opt in at the 5k level, a.k.a. the [mini menu](#). This shorter approach to freezer cooking gives you 5-6 recipes doubled for 10-12 meals in about 6-8 hours total, sometimes less! *(Includes shopping, prepping and cooking!)*

Are you an experienced cook? Overachiever? Have a rare day off from work? Taking advantage of having a babysitter? Opt for one of our [full menus](#). Each gives you recipes for [3 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 8 dinners](#), and each recipe is doubled, giving you 30 meals! All of the prep and cooking will take about 12-18 hours.

Now all you have to do is choose the [menu type](#) that fits your dietary needs or preferences!

- Traditional
- Paleo
- Real Food
- Gluten Free Dairy Free
- Diet
- Vegetarian
- Allergen
- Instant Pot
- Slow Cooker
- Baby
- Mini and more!



ARE YOU MAKING EXCUSES?

Let us help you find motivation!

Q: I don't have the right kitchen equipment.

A: Try to borrow it if you can't afford to buy it.

[The Basic Equipment](#) >

Q: I don't have a chest freezer.

A: Many of us don't! You just need to prioritize your space.

[Using an Apartment Freezer](#) >

Q: I don't have time for a cooking day.

A: Start with a Mini Menu and stock the freezer in a few short hours!

[How to Save 30 Hours!](#) >

Q: I don't have the money to freezer cook.

A: Use sale cycles, seasonal produce, and bulk purchases to reduce cooking costs.

[How to Save Money!](#) >

Q: I don't think you can really freeze...

A:pasta, rice, dairy, eggs, you name it! We have successfully frozen all of them!

[What you can Freeze!](#) >



Our Favorite Menus

We've made a list of some of our favorite menus for you to choose from! Hopefully these are a good starting point since we have 600+! **Find all of our menus** [here](#).

Full Menus

(15 recipes that make 30 meals)

- [30 Dinners in One Day Freezer Menu](#) >
- [Spring Vegetarian Freezer Menu Vol. 11](#) >
- [Spring Real Food Freezer Menu Vol. 16](#) >
- [Spring GAPS Allergen Freezer Menu Vol. 2](#) >
- [Spring Slow Cooker Freezer Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Summer Traditional Freezer Menu Vol. 18](#) >
- [Summer Paleo Freezer Menu Vol. 7](#) >
- [Summer Diet Freezer Menu Vol. 11](#) >
- [Fall Gluten Free Toddler Freezer Menu](#) >
- [Fall Toddler 12-18 Months Freezer Menu](#) >
- [Fall Traditional Freezer Menu Vol. 2](#) >
- [Winter Egg Free Allergen Freezer Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Winter Real Food Freezer Menu Vol. 6](#) >
- [Winter Instant Pot Freezer Menu Vol. 1](#) >

Mini Menu

(5+ recipes that make 10+ meals)

- [30 Minute Meals Mini Menu](#) >
- [Dinner in 30 Mini Menu](#) >
- [Better than the Freezer Aisle Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Spring Instant Pot Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Spring Slow Cooker Easy Assembly Mini Vol. 1](#) >
- [Spring Multicourse Mini Menu Vol. 3](#) >
- [Summer Easy Assembly Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Summer Breakfast Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Summer Whole Foods Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Fall Slow Cooker Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Winter Slow Cooker Mini Menu Vol. 4](#) >
- [Winter Paleo Slow Cooker Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Winter Soup Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >
- [Winter Paleo Instant Pot Mini Menu Vol. 1](#) >

Create Your Own

Did you know you can also start from scratch and build your own menu?

Add our blank menu called, "My Freezer Meal Plan" to create your very own menu today!

- [My Freezer Meal Plan](#) >



How to Create or Customize a Freezer Menu

Control freaks, dieters, parents of toddlers, and food allergy sufferers - rejoice! Your membership allows you to *fully customize* your recipe choices for your cooking day and print documents for your specific serving size.

Here's how to get started:

1. Add one of our premade [menus](#), or [create your own](#) menu.
2. Once you add a menu, start "[swapping](#)" your recipes to make changes. Swapping lets you search and filter our database of close to 6,000 freezer friendly recipes!
3. Use [the tags](#) and filters listed in our MenuBuilder system to make finding recipes easy!
4. Enter the number of servings you need. **The automatic default is 4 servings*
5. Then print all of your updated documents! Double check your recipes and serving size to make sure it's exactly what you want before you print!

More Menu Building Resources:

- [Can I mix and match recipes?](#) >
- [How do I edit and customize a menu?](#) >
- [How do I Create a Custom Freezer Meal Plan?](#) >
- [Can I start a menu from scratch?](#) >
- [How do I swap and delete recipes?](#) >

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YOUR MEAL PLANNING CHECKLIST



Add and Create a Menu!

Pick and choose the perfect recipes for a customized meal plan that fits your life and dietary needs.



Put it on the Calendar!

Schedule your cooking day sometime in the next 4 weeks. Make a commitment to yourself and protect that time, so you can see some return on your investment.

JOIN THE FAMILY!

The Once A Month Meals

COMMUNITY

Try flash freezing them! Then they won't stick!

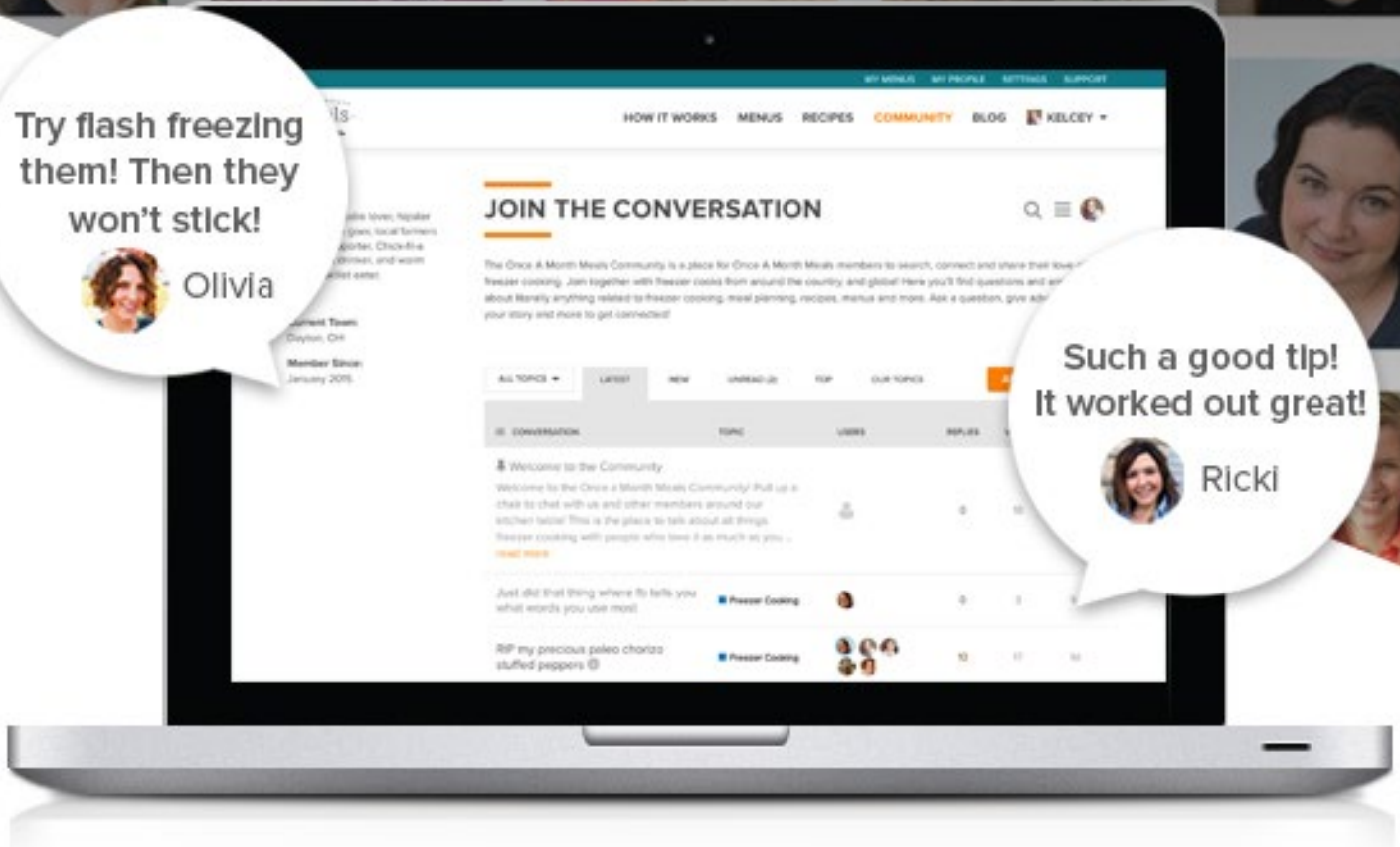


Olivia

Such a good tip! It worked out great!



Ricki



Once a Month Meals is not simply a product.

We are a community.

You always have access to menus, recipes, and resources. But the people are the glue that holds this thing together. We know, because they've invested in us from the very beginning. Now we have a new space where you can support each other and share your experience.

GET INVOLVED

MAKE

Your Meals



Coconut Chicken Curry - Paleo Version
Author Name: Regain
Recipe URL: <http://oncolean.com/recipes/multi-tofu-curry/>
Yield: 8 Servings

Mexican Pork and Sweet Potato Stew
Author Name: Kelly
Recipe URL: <http://oncolean.com/recipes/mexican-pork-and-sweet-potato-stew/>
Yield: 8 Servings

Cooking Day Instructions
This collection of recipes are all for the slow cooker and serving each recipe 2 times to 4 people.

Menu Description	Step	Stove Cook
Apple	1	
Bell Pepper, Green	2	
Boneless Pork Loin	3	
Carrot	2	
Celery	3	
Cherry	1	
Chicken, Boneless Breasts	0.75	
Garlic, Cloves	3	
Onion	7	
Onion	3	
Onion	7	

Ingredients

4 individual	1/2
4 tablespoons	ml
6 cups	oz
3 tablespoons	S
2 tablespoons	C
4 tablespoons	l
20 fluid ounces	5 cups
1 cup	1 cup
2.70 cups	2.70 cups
2.50 cups	2.50 cups
29 ounces	29 ounces
1 teaspoon	1 teaspoon
1 teaspoon	1 teaspoon
0.50 teaspoons	0.50 teaspoons

Supplies Needed

Mild Green Chiles, Diced, Canned
1 dice Boneless Pork Loin
1 dice and dice Sweet Potato
1 dice Onion
1 Diced Tomatoes, Fire Roasted
1 Cumin
1 Salt
1 Black Pepper

Serving Day Ingredients

2 tablespoons
2 tablespoons



Let's Start Cooking!

3 Steps to Take Before You Start Cooking!

You dream of a freezer full of meals stacked neatly in zippered baggies -- but you may be unsure exactly how you are going to make that dream a reality. Well, we're here to walk you through the course before you start the race!

**Count down to your big cooking day using our suggested timeline (in the yellow boxes!) to break up the tasks into manageable pieces so you aren't overwhelmed or exhausted by doing it all at once.*

1. Read ALL of Your Documents.

But really. Read, then read again. 5 Days Before

A freezer cooking instruction sheet is unlike anything you've ever seen in a meal plan before. It will tell you the *best and most efficient way* to tackle your to do list; so, get familiar with the steps. Make sure you have all of the equipment you need. Scan through your grocery list and see what you already have on hand. Then start making room in your refrigerator and freezer!



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR KITCHEN FOR THE BIG DAY

Counters

Remove nonessentials like dishes, decor, and coffee pots. Put them in another room temporarily if you must, otherwise, your counter space will fill up quickly!

Tables & Other Surfaces

Grab that picnic table in the garage, or something else and get creative! Use it as a station for pantry items, chopping, appliances, cooling food, packaging, and more!

Refrigerator & Freezer

Eat leftovers, toss expired foods, and make room for groceries and bowls on prep day. Eat any freezer meals, random bags of veggies, or cartons of ice cream cluttering up the freezer too.

Dishwasher & Trash Can

Empty them! Because you're about to fill them up! You might even want an extra one!

2. Grocery shop, then stop.

Go shopping before you cook. 2 Days Before

It could take anywhere from 30 minutes to 3 hours to complete your shopping trip(s). More if you need to visit multiple stores or live out in the boonies. *This also depends on how many meals you are making.*

You want to leave yourself plenty of time to compare prices, double check your list, and to answer for the third time why you're buying 25 bell peppers. You are NOT going to want to do this on the same day you freezer cook, so plan ahead!



Member, @simply.homestead

8 PRACTICAL TIPS FOR THE 1st Time Freezer Cook

1 Rest well & start early.

The best cooking days happen when you get to bed early, then start early!

2 Wear comfy clothes & shoes.

You're gonna be standing up and running around a lot, so make sure you stay comfortable!

3 Eat an easy breakfast & fill your water bottle.

Keep breakfast simple so you have less dishes, and always stay hydrated!

4 Follow directions! All of them!

READ. Before you start anything, read all your directions to make sure you don't miss anything!

5 Display your recipe cards.

Use holders or tape them to cabinets or walls so you can easily reference them during the day!

6 Clean as you go.

Simple, but necessary. You will be reusing a lot of your kitchen items, so be sure to clean!

7 Don't stop or sit down!

Really. Don't do it. You may never get back up. It's a long day, but you've got to push through!

8 Give yourself some grace.

Okay, maybe a lot. Break the work into two days if you need to. (Prepped food will keep just fine.)

3. Do Not Skip the Prep.

It's crucial to prepare your ingredients ahead of time.

1 Day Before

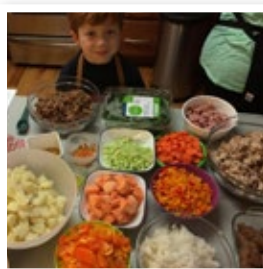
Even if you hate spreadsheets, do not toss this prep list!

Ever notice how cooking looks so easy on TV, and that all of the ingredients are already chopped and ready to go? Well friend, that's what we want for you! The prep sheet tells you what and how much to thaw, pre-cook, chop, slice, and dice to make cooking go *as fast as possible*.

Get your sharpest knife going, and prep all your ingredients the night or day before your scheduled cooking day. Also be sure to check out how other members prep before their big day by searching through the hashtag #onceamonthmeals on Instagram!



Member, @jaxarrow11



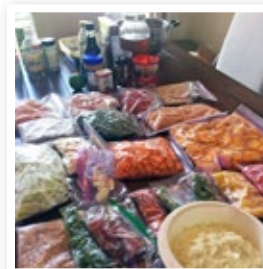
Member, @tomarbaugh



Member, @carissafarro



Member, @jellenloovey

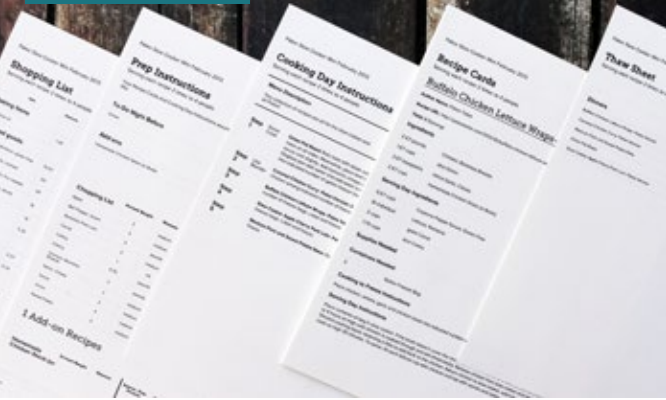


Staff Member, @kelceyflynn

YOUR COOKING DAY CHECKLIST

- Print Your Menu Documents.** *(Two weeks before cooking day)*
Read and use all of the resources. You won't regret following instructions.
- Grocery Shop!** *(One week before cooking day)*
Remember, you should plan a separate day for your grocery trip.
- Prepare Your Ingredients!** *(The day or two before cooking day)*
Do this the night before your cooking day. Don't forget to set up your kitchen too so you can start first thing in the morning.
- Cook All the Things!** *(The day of cooking day)*
Work your way through the recipes in the order you find them on your instruction sheet.
- Share Your Progress!** *(Throughout it all!)*
Snap a pic and share it on Instagram or Facebook! Don't forget to use #freezercooking #onceamonthmeals so we can find you!

1. READ



2. PREP

3. BAKE



4. COOK



5. COOL



6. ASSEMBLE



7. LABEL



8. FREEZE

Walk through a **Freezer Cooking Day**

FREEZE

For Later



Freeze it,
then eat it!

How to Keep Your Food Fresh

1. Choose the Right Containers.

Packaging is important. The less air you have inside the better. Our go-to containers are the plastic freezer bag and foil baking pans because they are easy to lay flat and stack. But there are many options of the *disposable and reusable* varieties. The key is a quality seal, so don't be afraid to spend more for a quality product.



2. Cool Your Freezer Meals.

Simply put, warm food inside the bag + cold air outside the bag = excess moisture. This condensation then freezes into ice crystals. Yuck. Be sure to completely cool your food before you seal and freeze. Yes, this takes extra time, but that is why you are planning ahead!



Our Favorite Freezer Containers

1. [The Baggie Holder](#) >
2. [Ziplock Freezer Bags](#) >
3. [Pyrex Glass Containers](#) >
4. [Neatos Bags](#) >
5. [Foil Baking Pans](#) >



3. Know How Long Your Freezer Meals Last

This is a high frequency question, and the simple answer is that food rarely (if ever) spoils in the freezer. BUT it does lose quality over time. *For freezer meals, 3-6 months is a good rule of thumb for freshness.*

Freezer Organization

We know. They all look alike once they're in the freezer, so organization is essential!

- **Label Meals.** Print your custom labels complete with the recipe name and instructions for thawing and eating on serving day. Don't forget to add the date!






Note: OAMM labels are formatted for [Avery 8168/5168 labels](#).

- **Keep a Freezer Inventory.** Add new meals to a running list of all of the meals, side dishes, frozen veggies, and ice cream in your freezer, and cross them off when you use them. Know what is inside the freezer without even opening it!

[Download Freezer Inventory Sheet](#)

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FREEZER STORAGE CHEAT SHEET

Meat		Months	Basics		Months
	Steak	4 - 12		Rice	6
	Chops	4 - 6		Flour	12
	Joints	9 - 12		Bread	3
	Mince	3 - 4		Cakes	2 - 3
	Bacon	1		Pastries	4 - 6
	Sausage	1 - 2		Pizza	1 - 2
	Soups	4		Tofu	5
	Stocks	4 - 6		Fruit	8 - 12
	Stews	3 - 6		Vegetables	8 - 12
	Poultry			Months	Dairy
	Whole	1		Butter	9
	Part	6 - 9		Margarine	12
	Cooked	4		Ice Cream	2
	Eggs (not in shell)	9		Cheese	6
				Yoghurt	1 - 2
Fish		Months	Special Freezer Notes		
	Lean	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Never put warm food in the freezer. That's what causes freezer burn! ✓ Get as much air out of the container as possible. The less air, the longer it will keep! ✓ <i>Flash freeze</i> items so they won't stick together in your container or bag. 		
	Oily	2 - 3			
	Breaded	4 - 6			
	Cooked	4 - 6			
	Smoked	2			
	Seafood	3 - 6			



Member, @lifeasadad

Make a Plan for Dinner

Your freezer is full, but now comes the traditional meal planning part. The real life part. You still have to decide what's for dinner each week and plan to thaw and eat it.

1. Meal Plan from the Freezer

Unlike some meal planning sites, we are not going to tell you what to eat each day of the week. Your schedule is unique, and your meal plan should fit your life! But we do have some samples for you to look at and a helpful calendar template.

[Download Meal Planning Template](#)

2. Remember to Thaw Safely

We will tell you that the key to eating from the freezer is giving your meals time to thaw. So leave yourself a sticky note or set an alarm on your phone to remind you. Most dishes will take 24-48 hours to thaw in the refrigerator. If you have a large piece of meat or casserole pan, plan for the upper end of that. Don't risk your health by trying to thaw more quickly on the counter. And don't risk the quality of your dish by rushing it through the microwave.

[More About Safe Thawing](#)

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YOUR FREEZING CHECKLIST

- Label and Freeze Your Bags.**
Label your bags and lay them flat to freeze when they are cool.
- Take Inventory!**
Print and fill out the [Freezer Inventory Worksheet](#).
- Plan Dinner.**
Print and fill out the [Meal Planning Worksheet](#).
- Share With Us!**
Share a photo of your FULL freezer! #freezercooking #onceamonthmeals



Member, @janicereyesphotography



Member, @scrappinwithmybug



Member, @jafarms



Member, @ian_jph



Member, @livenaturalgirl



Member, @heatherbrum



Member, @sammyb0405



Staff Member, Matt



Member, @btvet

CONGRATULATIONS!

You and so many others are making it happen!
Now all that is left is to eat, and enjoy what matters most!

Take it to the
**NEXT
LEVEL**



Resources to Help you **Freezer Cook for Life.**

Now that you have survived your first freezer cooking day, you can use a little of your free time to learn more. Save even more time and money. Make freezer cooking fit your unique life. Share meals, and get involved in your community. *P.S. Don't forget, the images are [interactive](#), so click for more details!*





COMMUNITY

is your most valuable resource!

(So get started, and use it!)

1 Set Up Your Profile.

Make it personal! Upload a profile picture & header image, then tell us where you're from and a little bit about yourself!

2 Search Conversations.

There are hundreds of conversations happening all the time between members. Search to find one that's interesting to you!

3 Join the Conversation.

Have a question from the start? Or see something you have experience with? Share your question, answer, method, tip, trick, and more with us and others!

4 Share Your Journey.

We want to meet you! Introduce yourself and tell us and other members why you want to start freezer cooking! P.S. You can share your profile link with anyone!

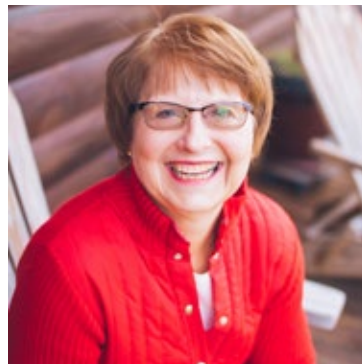
5 Connect with others.

Get the best advice around! Our members have been freezer cooking for years so don't hesitate to explore and ask questions!

GET STARTED!

Thanks for Joining us!

We can't wait for you to enjoy your meals and all your free time to enjoy what matters most to you.



HAPPY COOKING!

Once A Month Meals