

**Dear Educator,**

For many of your students, the past two years have meant more family time at home, more family meals together, and more opportunities to prepare meals as a family. Now that students are back in the classroom, you can turn those experiences into a teachable moment with this free educational program from the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired and the National Frozen & Refrigerated Foods Association (NFRA).

Designed to supplement your language arts and health curricula, the program includes standards-based activities on healthy eating, food safety, and food waste that show students (and their families) how frozen and refrigerated foods can be a smart, convenient, eco-friendly way to prepare balanced meals that combine flavors from around the world.

We encourage you to share this free program with other teachers in your school. Although these materials are protected by copyright, you may make as many copies as you need for educational purposes.

And please visit [ymiclassroom.com/feedback-thinkcool](http://ymiclassroom.com/feedback-thinkcool) to let us know your thoughts on this program. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired

Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005 or by email at [feedback@ymiclassroom.com](mailto:feedback@ymiclassroom.com).

# THINK COOL: EAT HEALTHY AND REDUCE FOOD WASTE

## Target Audience

Students in grades 3-5 and their families

## Program Objectives

- Raise awareness about good nutrition, food safety, and how to avoid food waste
- Encourage students to eat nutritional food and practice sustainable food routines

## Program Components

Visit [ymiclassroom.com/thinkcool](http://ymiclassroom.com/thinkcool) for:

- This two-page teacher's guide
- Two reproducible activity sheets
- A one-page downloadable family take-home letter
- Educational standards

## How to Use This Program

Download, copy, and distribute the two activities to students, and share the family letter with parents and caregivers. You can also share the program link with parents to do the activities with their children at home.

## ACTIVITY 1

### THRILL TO THE CHILL

In this activity, students learn about the issue of food waste, including factors that contribute to food waste and what can be done to help prevent it.

Start by showing students the one-minute "Reducing Food Waste Whiteboard Animation" available at [www.easyhomemeals.com/?s=food+waste](http://www.easyhomemeals.com/?s=food+waste).

Then challenge students to show off what they have learned by playing "three corners." Put up signs in three corners of your classroom: One sign should read "True," one sign "False," and the third "Uncertain." Have students gather in the room's fourth corner, then read the following true/false statements and have students move quickly to the corner they think is correct. Some statements are taken from the video, and some will be a surprise! Discuss the correct answer after each statement on the next page.





### Answers:

1. The number one component in American landfills is food waste. (True)
2. The average family throws out 200 lbs. of food a year. (False—It's 300 lbs.)
3. Throwing out 300 lbs. of food waste is like throwing away \$300. (False—It's about \$2,000.)
4. Buying frozen foods can help reduce food waste. (True—They last longer, and we can use only what we need.)
5. Frozen fruits and vegetables are 100% edible. (True)
6. Refrigerated and perishable food should always be refrigerated within two hours of purchase or use. (True)
7. You can freeze milk, eggs, and cheese. (True. If time allows, show the students the short, fun videos “Can I Freeze Milk?,” “Can I Freeze Eggs?,” and “Can I Freeze Cheese?” available at [www.easyhomemeals.com/tips/](http://www.easyhomemeals.com/tips/) to learn how.)

Have students return to their seats. Explain that food waste often happens because food is left out in temperatures that are too warm, “goes bad”, and is thrown out. That is why refrigerated and perishable food should always be refrigerated within two hours of purchase or use. Cold temperatures slow the growth of potentially harmful bacteria, and refrigerating or freezing food is the best way to preserve it. In fact, the food you find in the freezer section—including meat, seafood, fruit, and vegetables—is “flash frozen.” That means frozen quickly at very low temperatures. Flash freezing locks in nutrition and taste and allows you to eat the food when you are ready! For more information about flash freezing, see the brief video “Frozen Foods: The Story from Farm to Fork” at [www.easyhomemeals.com/tips/frozen-foods-story-farm-fork](http://www.easyhomemeals.com/tips/frozen-foods-story-farm-fork).

Pass out the activity sheet. Have students work individually or with a partner to solve the food waste word problems, and then do the writing activity.

**Answers:** Part 1: 1. 40%; 2. \$2,000; 3. 665 billion pounds. Part 2: Answers will vary.

### ACTIVITY 2

#### *WELCOME TO THE TEST KITCHEN!*

In this activity, students learn that individual items and prepared meals found in the dairy and frozen food aisles are created by skilled chefs.

Ask students to share if they have helped prepare meals at home. Is it easy? Fun? Would they like to be a chef? Tell students that chefs don't just work in restaurants—they also are the experts who put together the fresh, delicious ingredients found in refrigerated and frozen foods and prepared meals. Chefs use their food knowledge and kitchen experience to combine nutrition, taste, and freshness into meals that will appeal to everyone!

Now it's your students' turn to put on a chef's hat and plan a meal. Have students work in groups to complete the activity sheet. When finished, ask the groups to share their meal ideas with each other.

### Resources

National Frozen & Refrigerated Foods Association:  
[NFRAweb.org](http://NFRAweb.org)

U.S. Department of Agriculture MyPlate: [MyPlate.gov](http://MyPlate.gov)  
YMI program site: [ymiclassroom.com/thinkcool](http://ymiclassroom.com/thinkcool)

# THRILL TO THE CHILL

As you've seen, food waste is a serious problem in America. But you and your family can help by using frozen and refrigerated foods!

Frozen foods are *flash frozen* to lock in flavor and nutrients. This quick-chill method uses extremely cold air to keep ice crystals small. This prevents the food from losing moisture and drying out when it thaws. So when you're ready to use it, the food is as fresh as the day it was picked or prepared. And because we can take only the amount of food we need, there is much less waste.

Here are some other ways to help reduce food waste:

- Follow the recommended portion size on the Nutrition Facts label so you don't prepare more food than you can eat.
- Only thaw the amount of frozen food that you are going to eat.
- Keep an eye on the "use by" dates on refrigerated foods so they don't go to waste.

## Part 1

Now solve these word problems to find out why we need to do all we can to reduce food waste!

1. Americans eat only 60% of the food they buy. What percent of the food is thrown out?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. An average American family of four throws away up to \$2,000 worth of food each year. How much is that per person?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. About 133 billion pounds of food is thrown away every year in America. In five years, how many billion pounds of food is that?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2

Time to take action! Explain why food waste is a problem in America. Then list two ways families can help solve the problem.

### Why Food Waste Is a Big Problem:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### How Families Can Help Solve the Problem:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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FAMILIES: VISIT **EASYHOMEMEALS.COM** TO FIND DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS RECIPES USING FROZEN AND REFRIGERATED INGREDIENTS.

# WELCOME TO THE TEST KITCHEN!

Today you learned that refrigerated and frozen meals are created by experienced chefs. Now it's your turn! Put on your chef's hat and get cooking! Work with your group to answer the questions below and create a tasty, healthy, and nutritious frozen or refrigerated meal.

## Part 1

To get started, check your plate! The MyPlate guidelines recommend that meals should be balanced among the five food groups to help us get the nutrients we need. Make sure your meal includes foods from each group. Check out **MyPlate.gov** and the foods in the box for ideas or come up with your own.

### Food Groups

Fruits \_\_\_\_\_

Vegetables \_\_\_\_\_

Grains \_\_\_\_\_

Protein \_\_\_\_\_

Dairy \_\_\_\_\_

Fruits	Frozen berries such as blackberries or blueberries
Vegetables	Frozen carrots, cauliflower, broccoli
Grains	Frozen brown rice, whole grain bread, refrigerated thin pizza crust dough
Protein	Frozen grilled chicken strips, hamburger, eggs
Dairy	Milk, yogurt, cheese

## Part 2

You have your healthy meal planned. Now, before you head to the (imaginary) kitchen, like all chefs, you need to understand the "Core Four" food safety rules:

- **Clean**—Always wash your hands and food prep materials with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before you start preparing food.
- **Separate**—Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in your grocery shopping cart, grocery bags, and in your refrigerator.
- **Cook**—Cook food to a safe internal temperature—use a cooking thermometer to check!
- **Chill**—Refrigerate or freeze food quickly after purchase or use and keep your refrigerator's temperature at 40 degrees Fahrenheit.



Below, draw a picture of your meal on the left, and a picture of a safe food practice—one of the "Core Four"—on the right!

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# THINK COOL: EAT HEALTHY AND REDUCE FOOD WASTE

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Did you know that 40% of food in the United States doesn't get eaten? Food waste is a huge problem in our country. In fact, the main component of landfills is food waste. Altogether, Americans throw away about 133 billion pounds of food each year.\*

Fortunately, we can all do our part to reduce food waste—and make family mealtime easier—without sacrificing taste or nutrition. Look no further than your grocery's frozen food and dairy aisles.



Your child has been learning some tips in class to prevent food waste and promote food safety and nutrition with an educational program made possible by the National Frozen & Refrigerated Foods Association (NFRA). Ask your child to share what they've learned and explore these topics further at home. Try these tips to get started:

## Frozen and Refrigerated Foods Reduce Food Waste

Choosing frozen and refrigerated foods, including ready-to-cook nutritious meals and pre-chopped frozen fruits and vegetables, enables you to take only what you need and store the rest for later, which reduces food waste and prevents throwing away money with your uneaten food. As a family, discuss how you can include more refrigerated and frozen foods in your meals to help reduce food waste.

## Food Safety Helps Reduce Food Waste

The "Core Four"\*\*\* food safety practices help ensure that the food you purchase is safe to eat and won't get thrown out. As a family, discuss how you can follow these rules in your kitchen.

- **Clean** – Always wash your hands and food prep materials before you start preparing food.
- **Separate** – Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in your grocery shopping cart, grocery bags, and in your refrigerator.
- **Cook** – Cook food to a safe internal temperature—use a cooking thermometer to check.
- **Chill** – Refrigerate or freeze food quickly after purchase or use, and keep your refrigerator's temperature at 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and the freezer at 0 degrees.

## Plan Your Meals and Grocery List

Engage your child in planning meals to help reinforce the importance of choosing nutritionally-balanced meals. Ask about the meal plan your child created in class and try it out for a family meal. Then explore the frozen food and dairy sections of your local supermarket together to discover the range of available foods. With foods and beverages from these aisles, create a list of new foods and recipes you would like to try as a family.



\* [easyhomemeals.com/tips/food-waste-infographic/](https://www.easyhomemeals.com/tips/food-waste-infographic/)  
\*\* [fightbac.org/food-safety-basics/the-core-four-practices/](https://www.fightbac.org/food-safety-basics/the-core-four-practices/)

VISIT **EASYHOMEMEALS.COM** TO FIND DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS RECIPES USING FROZEN AND REFRIGERATED INGREDIENTS.