

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, family and consumer science, 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 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.

THINK COOL: EAT HEALTHY AND REDUCE FOOD WASTE

Target Audience

Students in grades 6-8 and their families

Program Objectives

- Raise awareness about nutrition, food safety, and food waste
- Support nutrition, sustainability, and practical life skills

Program Components

Visit 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 the 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.

Then challenge students to show off what they have learned by playing "hand signals." Read the following true/false statements and have students give a thumbs up for "true," a thumbs down for "false," and a horizontal open hand for "uncertain." 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 to learn how.)

Next, explain to students that food waste often happens because food is left out in temperatures that are too warm, “goes bad,” and is thrown out. This is why refrigerated and perishable foods 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 it is 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.

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

Answers: Part 1: Strawberries and cream—Mark; Blueberries and granola—Chase; Peaches and yogurt—Starla; Banana smoothie—Aria. Part 2: Answers will vary.

ACTIVITY 2

WELCOME TO THE TEST KITCHEN!

In this activity, students will learn that individual items and 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 enjoy being 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. 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

U.S. Department of Agriculture MyPlate: MyPlate.gov
YMI program site: ymiclassroom.com/thinkcool

THRILL TO THE CHILL

Did you know that 40% of the food in the United States does not get eaten? That's almost half of the food! The average family throws away about 300 pounds of food each year, which adds up to about \$2,000 wasted. That's a lot of waste.*

How can we prevent this? One way to reduce food waste is to use 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, which 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.

Refrigerated food also helps reduce food waste because cold temperatures slow the growth of potentially harmful bacteria—which means your food won't "go bad," forcing you to throw it away. Just remember to always refrigerate perishable and leftover food within two hours of purchase or use.

Part 1

Now, use your problem-solving skills to complete this puzzle. You'll learn tips to include more refrigerated and frozen foods in your meals. Starla, Mark, Chase, and Aria are making fruit snacks! They all want different snacks, and fortunately they have a well-stocked refrigerator and freezer full of nutrient-rich, delicious, flash-frozen fruits to choose from. Use the clues to determine which dessert each person makes.

- Mark is allergic to blueberries.
- Starla's dessert does not contain any berries.
- Chase likes berries but only if they don't stain his fingers red.
- Aria pulls some bananas out of the refrigerator.

Dessert	Starla	Mark	Chase	Aria
Strawberries and cream				
Blueberries and granola				
Peaches and yogurt				
Banana smoothie				

Part 2

Here are some other ways to prevent 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.

Now think about what's in your refrigerator and freezer at home. What could you change to reduce food waste? For example, you might stock up pre-grilled chicken strips or get bags of frozen fruits and vegetables, then take only what you need from each bag. Or maybe there's a way to rearrange your refrigerator so that you don't end up throwing any food away. Write your ideas here!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

* easymomemeals.com/tips/food-waste-infographic/



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

WELCOME TO THE TEST KITCHEN!

Food is the fuel you put in your body. The more nutritious your meals are, the better your body and brain will perform.

According to the MyPlate guidelines developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (MyPlate.gov), people should eat foods from the five food groups at every meal: dairy, fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein. Here's how:

- Half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables to give your body the important vitamins and nutrients you need to grow. Choose fruits and vegetables of different colors to ensure you are getting a good mixture of vitamins and nutrients.
- One quarter of your plate should be protein, which is important for strong muscles and keeping your body running smoothly. Choose lean cuts of meat for your protein, and mix it up a little by trying seafood or lentils.
- Another quarter of your plate should be grains, such as rice or pasta. Make at least half of those whole grains.
- Finally, add around a cup of dairy to your meal, such as low-fat yogurt or milk.



Part 1

Now it's time to put on your chef's hat and get cooking! (Not for real.) On the back of this sheet, work with your group to plan a tasty, healthy, and nutritious meal using frozen and refrigerated foods. Your meal must include all the MyPlate food groups: dairy, fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein. You can show your meal plan in a chart or in a drawing of the MyPlate graphic.

Part 2

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

1. **Clean**—Always wash your hands and food prep materials before you start preparing food.
2. **Separate**—Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in your grocery shopping cart, grocery bags, and in your refrigerator.
3. **Cook**—Cook food to a safe internal temperature—use a thermometer!
4. **Chill**—Refrigerate or freeze perishable or leftover food within two hours of purchase or use, and keep your refrigerator's temperature at 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

How do these rules apply to the meal you have planned? Use the space below to list the safety steps you would take to prepare your meal.



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.