Freezing guidance to prevent food waste

Having clear and consistent freezing guidance on packs will help to reduce consumer confusion and support better understanding around the use of food. This leads to reduced waste and food safety risks.

Consumers are currently throwing away around £6.7 billion of food and drink each year due to it ‘not being used in time’. Much of this food could have been frozen and eaten at a later date.

Confusion about whether a product is suitable for freezing and how best to freeze it to maximise its quality are two of the reasons why food is thrown away rather than frozen.

Outlined below are five key recommendations for how food businesses can help their customers and the environment by helping them make the best out of the food they buy.

1. Make it clear it can be frozen
WRAP’s Retailer Survey showed that 63% of freezable products carried freezing guidance and 44% displayed the snowflake logo. So the first step is to review your products to determine their suitability for home-freezing. Where appropriate include the ‘snowflake’ logo on the label with text ‘suitable for home freezing’, or equivalent.

Here are a few examples of products, found in the survey, that illustrate the potential for customer confusion:
- 25% of all yoghurts displayed guidance ‘not to freeze’ when they are suitable to freeze.
- 12% of milk packs stated ‘not suitable for freezing’, while 24% carried freezing guidance.
- 4% of orange juice advised against freezing, while 19% carried freezing guidance.

Key barriers: consumers not knowing ...
- What can be frozen
- How long after purchase it can be frozen
- How long it can be kept frozen
- What to freeze it in / any pre-preparation required in order to freeze it
- How to defrost / cook and use it

2. Use ‘freeze before date mark’ labelling
92% of respondents to a WRAP survey were regularly freezing fresh/refrigerated food at home. Of those, one in four froze food bought on special offer/promotion. 59% thought they had to freeze the food on the day of purchase.

To extend the life of food beyond its ‘use by’ date, it is safe to freeze it up to the day before the date and then defrost and use it within 24 hours. This ensures the overall ‘use by’ date is not exceeded. The same guidance can be used for ‘best before’ dated products, to ensure they are frozen at their best quality, or labelled to ‘freeze as soon as possible after purchase’.

Using a ‘freeze before date mark, defrost and use within 24 hours’ label is recommended rather than ‘freeze on day of
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