



A “Fresh” Take on Veggies

Fresh isn't always best. While fresh fruits and vegetables have their place, refrigerated and frozen options can be just as nutritious. In many cases, they're also easier to work with, more affordable, and less likely to go to waste.

Here's something you may not expect: frozen produce often contains more nutrients than fresh. That's because it's picked at peak ripeness and frozen quickly, which helps preserve vitamins that would otherwise break down during transport and storage. In one study, frozen broccoli had significantly more vitamin C than the fresh version after just five days in the fridge.

Of course, each type has its strengths. Frozen vegetables work best in meals where texture isn't the focus. They're ideal for mixed dishes like stir-fries, soups, pastas, or casseroles, where they soften into the dish without needing to hold their shape.

Fresh produce is a better choice when texture, structure, or bright flavor is key to the final result. It works well in raw salads and snack plates, but also in dishes like roasted vegetables, sautéed greens, or tomato-based sauces where too much water from frozen ingredients can affect cooking time or dilute flavor. If you want crisp edges, caramelization, or concentrated taste, fresh is usually the better bet.

Refrigerated produce can help too, especially when prep is a barrier. Pre-cut squash, bagged greens, slaw mix, and ready-to-eat items like pico de gallo or steamed lentils offer the convenience of fast meals without giving up on nutrition. They're often less expensive than fresh-cut versions from the deli, and they hold up better over the course of the week.

Here are a few easy ways to make the most of these options:

- Add frozen spinach to pasta, soup, or eggs
- Blend frozen mango or cherries into smoothies or stir them into yogurt
- Use refrigerated slaw mix in tacos, wraps, or grain bowls
- Stir-fry frozen veggie blends with noodles and miso-cashew sauce (see recipe below)
- Sauté frozen mushrooms with garlic and thyme for an easy side or sandwich topping
- Roast fresh broccoli or cauliflower and toss with refrigerated pesto or romesco
- Mix frozen edamame and corn with lime juice and chili powder for a fast snack or salad base
- Use refrigerated beets with orange segments and feta for a simple cold salad
- Combine frozen bell peppers and onions with scrambled eggs or tofu for a quick breakfast wrap
- Toss shredded carrots into peanut noodles or spring rolls for crunch without chopping
- Add frozen peas to risotto, grain bowls, or potato salad for a fresh pop of color
- Top whole grain flatbread with quick-sautéed frozen spinach, jarred artichokes, and your favorite cheese for a fast pizza
- Warm up frozen butternut squash, then mash with curry powder and yogurt to spread on naan or pita; top with chickpeas and herbs
- Use frozen corn and canned black beans as a base for tostadas or flatbread; finish with salsa, avocado, and shredded lettuce
- Layer refrigerated hummus, roasted peppers, and sliced cucumbers on warm flatbread for an easy lunch or snack plate
- Spread marinara on pita, top with frozen bell peppers and mushrooms, and bake for quick veggie pizzas the whole family can customize
- Make a Mediterranean flatbread with refrigerated lentils, chopped olives, diced tomatoes, and crumbled feta
- Spread ricotta on toasted naan, top with frozen peas warmed in olive oil, and finish with lemon zest and cracked black pepper

Quick tip: If you're trying to reduce sodium, choose plain frozen vegetables without sauce or seasoning. You can add your own flavor with spices, citrus, or a splash of low-sodium soy sauce or vinegar.

Miso-Cashew Veggie Noodles



Creamy, nutty, and full of deep savory flavor, this flexible dish is perfect for any mix of frozen veggies you have on hand. Serve warm or cold.

Ingredients:

- 8 oz noodles (soba, rice noodles, or whole wheat spaghetti all work)
- 3 cups frozen stir-fry vegetables (like broccoli, bell peppers, and snap peas)
- ½ cup frozen edamame
- ¼ cup unsalted cashew butter (or peanut or almond butter)
- 1 tablespoon white or yellow miso*
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce (or tamari)*
- 1–2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- 2–3 tablespoons warm water (to thin the sauce)
- Optional toppings: scallions, sesame seeds, chili flakes, lime wedges

**If you're on a low-sodium diet, use less and/or use a low-sodium version.*

Instructions:

1. Cook noodles according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
2. While noodles cook, steam or sauté frozen vegetables and edamame until heated through and tender.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together cashew butter, miso, vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, and warm water until smooth and pourable.
4. Toss cooked noodles with vegetables and sauce. Adjust seasoning to taste.
5. Top with scallions, sesame seeds, or chili flakes if desired. Serve warm or chilled.