

下味冷凍で時短クッキング Meal prep in a freezer bag

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In this article, I will provide the recipes for basic Japanese meal preps that you can store in the freezer (up to one month⁺⁺⁺). Please remember that the recipes in this article are to be served with rice.⁺⁺⁺

Here are the basic Japanese spices that you should have:

- salt
- pepper
- sugar
- fresh ginger^{\$\$\$}
- fresh garlic
- sesame oil

This is for flavor. You can mix a few drops with normal cooking oil to cut the cost.

- Japanese chicken bouillon powder

The Japanese chicken bouillon is not greasy at all. You can use a normal chicken bouillon cube from a local supermarket, but if you have a choice, you may want to try the one with less oil.

- Japanese soy sauce

On the Polish market, "Kikkoman" and "Yamasa" are available. Other brands may have different taste.

- "Miso"

Miso can be "white," "red" or "with dashi," but the order of preference is: *red* > *white* > *with dashi*. The opened pack of miso can be stored in the freezer. It will not be frozen.

- "Mirin"

Traditionally mirin contains alcohol and the substitution rule is [Mirin = Sake + sugar]. On the Polish market, just like in Japan, there are 2 kinds of mirin: with alcohol, and without. For the meal preps, "mirin with alcohol" is recommended.



Soy sauce

Optionally,

- **Japanese sake.** You can use "mirin with alcohol," beer or white wine as a substitute. If you use "mirin with alcohol" as a substitute, it's [1 spoon of sake = 1 spoon of mirin].
- **"Dashi"** (Japanese fish bouillon). It will not be used in the meal preps, but many traditional recipes will require this.

And of course, **a box of freezer bags**. The bag with a deep pocket, something like 17.5 cm wide 24 cm deep, is easy to use for 2-4 servings.

The used freezer bag can be washed and used again, if you don't want to throw it away after one-time use. If you are concerned about hygiene - for example, using it to freeze fresh meat again - you can reuse it to store something else.

⁺⁺⁺ The storage duration will vary, depending on the type of meat & vegetable and also on their initial condition. If you use the recipes in this article, do so at your own risk.

⁺⁺⁺ Japanese rice recipe: (1) Get "sushi rice"; (2) Put 1 cup of rice + 1 ¼ cup of water in a pot, and heat it up until you see a couple of bubble popping up (=just before it starts to boil); (3) Cover the pot and lower the heat to minimum and leave it on fire for 15 mins. If water starts to come out of the pot, let the steam out and close the cover again; (4) Stop the fire, and leave it covered for another 15 mins; (5) Mix the rice, and serve. See also the "sushi rice" package for the rice-specific cooking instruction.

^{\$\$\$} You can store the grated ginger in the freezer for a long time. Just grate the whole ginger you get in a supermarket, separate it in tea-spoon-size portions, wrap them individually in plastic wraps, and then pack them in a freezer bag and put it in the freezer.

The basic recipes (2-3 servings):

1) Soy-sauce based pack

- Soy sauce: 1 spoon
- Japanese sake: 1 spoon
- Mirin: 1 spoon

2) Miso based pack

- Miso: 1 spoon
- Japanese sake: 1 spoon
- sugar: 1 teaspoon

Note:

spoon = tablespoon = 15ml

teaspoon = 5ml

3) Garlic based pack

- grated garlic: 1 clove
- Japanese sake: 1 spoon
- sesame oil: 1/2 spoon
- salt: 1/2 teaspoon

4) Mayonnaise based pack

- Mayonnaise: 1 spoon
- Japanese sake: 1 spoon
- Miso: 1 teaspoon
- grated garlic: 1 teaspoon
- salt & pepper: a pinch each

To one of these spice packs, add

- about **300g of meat** (chicken or pork), cut into bite-size pieces,
- optionally **a sliced or chopped onion**.

Put everything in a freezer bag and mix well. Take the air out of the bag as much as possible, and make the bag as flat as possible by distributing the meat evenly inside it (see the picture at the beginning of the article). Put it in the freezer.

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When you use it,

- 1) Move the frozen bag to the refrigerator and leave it there for 3-4 hours to defrost naturally. The meat doesn't have to be completely defrosted; in fact, it's better if it's not completely defrosted. The defrosting process is only for making it easier to take the contents out of the freezer bag.
- 2) Put a little bit of oil on the pan, and warm it up.
- 3) Empty the contents of the freezer bag on the pan and cover it. Cook/steam it with low-to-medium heat for 10-15 mins. You can stir it from time to time.
- 4) When the surface of the meat looks cooked, you can throw in 1 or 2 of your favorite vegetables* and fry them together. (* Grated fresh ginger, chopped onions, carrots and paprika are popular, but you can throw in zucchini, tomatoes, and potatoes, too)

Meat specific recipes:

Ginger pork

- pork: 200g
- soy sauce: 1 spoon
- mirin: 1 spoon
- Japanese sake: 1 spoon
- grated ginger: 1 spoon
- sesame oil: 1 teaspoon

Miso pork

- pork: 300g
- miso: 3 spoons
- sake: 1 spoon
- mirin: 1 spoon
- soy sauce: 1 spoon
- sugar: 1 teaspoon

Sweet & Spicy pork

- soy sauce: 2 spoons
- Japanese sake: 2 spoons
- Mirin: 2 spoons
- sugar: 1/2 spoon

Garlic chicken

- chicken: 300g
- potato flour (*mąka ziemniaczana*): 1 spoon
- Japanese sake: 1 spoon
- sesame oil: 1/2 spoon
- chicken bouillon powder: 1/2 spoon
- sugar: 1/2 teaspoon
- grated garlic: 1/2 teaspoon
- pepper: 1/4 teaspoon
- salt: one pinch