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## How to defrost lamb quickly

This post may contain affiliate links. Do you know what you want to have for supper the day before? Or even the morning of? I rarely do. I try to plan meals for the week (I've even tried doing it for the month!) but I rarely stick to the plan. But while I know I'm not good at meal-planning ahead of time, I'm also not one of those people who can just stop into the grocery store every day and grab some things for dinner that night. Which is why I was so excited to hear Harold McGee, author of Keys to Good Cooking: A Guide to Making the Best of Foods and Recipes, telling Lynne Rosetto Kasper on The Splendid Table that recent scientific studies have found a new way to defrost meat safely and quickly. As some of us may have already found, relying on the microwave can be tricky. It can do things really unevenly. For me, this means that I don't have to plan as far ahead. I can have some chicken breasts, thighs, sausages, steaks and pork chops in the freezer and then defrost them quickly right before I'm ready to cook. I also found a few ways to cook steak, chicken breasts, fish, and shrimp from their frozen state and that works well, too. However, I've tried this new technique several times and I'm now ready to tell you how to thaw meat quickly and safely in hot water. How to Thaw Meat Quickly and Safely in Hot Water When you bring your meat home from the grocery store, transfer it into 1 gallon freezer-safe sealable bags. Four chicken breasts per bag, 2 steaks or large chops per bag. Lay the bags flat in the freezer and spread the pieces of meat out so that they not touching. Once they're frozen you can stack the bags upright or however you want. The key here is that you want each piece of meat to have as much room around it as possible so that the heat of the water will reach it easily. If the meat freezes together into a clump of pieces, it won't defrost quickly enough and that isn't safe. Fill a large pot (think big stock pot) with your hottest tap water. Full. You want lots of water here, lots more hot water than icy meat so that the temperature won't drop too much when the two meet up. Add 1 or 2 ziplock bags of frozen meat. Put something on top of the meat to weigh it down (a plate or large serving spoon work). Set a timer for 15 minutes. Return to the pot and give it a stir every few minutes so that the water stays at an even temperature and is not cooler next to the meat. When your timer goes off, your meat should be defrosted. Cook it immediately or refrigerate it until you're ready to cook. Note: This method only works for small cuts of meat like steaks, chops and chicken pieces (including breasts, thighs, drumsticks, and wings). It is not safe to use this method for larger cuts of meat like roasts. The idea is that the meat is in hot water for such a short time that bacteria doesn't have a chance to grow. If the cut of meat were larger and required more time in the hot water, then bacteria would have a chance to begin growing and the method ceases to be safe. Furthermore, there is always a risk of contracting or consuming bacteria when you eat meat and poultry. I am not responsible for any illness or sickness you may contract from meat or poultry defrosted using this method or any other method. Handle meat and poultry with care and always consult a reputable source to find the safe temperatures to which the meat or poultry you are cooking needs to reach before eating. Do you have a tip for getting dinner on the table quickly? I'd love to hear about it. Leave a comment below. \*Click here to read/listen to what McGee has to say about how to thaw meat quickly. Click here to see the abstract of the study about thawing meat in hot water from the Journal of Food Science. This post originally appeared in July 2013. It was revised and republished in September 2018. See COOK the STORY's nutrition and recipe disclaimers. Thawing frozen meat can make people nervous — no one wants to create any risk of foodborne illness. But keeping meat in the freezer is a smart way to cut down on trips to the market, and take advantage of great sales on your favorite cuts of meat. Never Thaw Meat at Room Temperature For safety reasons, meat should never be thawed on the counter at room temperature or in a bowl of warm or hot water (anything over 105 degrees F). The following methods will show you how to thaw meat and keep it out of the temperature zone that allows bacteria to grow, 40 degrees to 140 degrees F, which is the "danger zone" for the growth of microorganisms. Best Ways to Defrost Meat In general, larger cuts of meat should be defrosted in the refrigerator, as the meat will start to cook on the outside if it is thawed in a microwave, and it will take a very long time in a bowl of water. Smaller or thinner cuts, like flank steak or pork chops, do well with the water thawing or microwave method. Standing Rib Roast for a Small Crowd, about to go into the oven Thawing Frozen Meat in the Refrigerator This method is the most trustworthy and dependable method, also the one that you don't have to monitor while it's happening. The only downside is that it takes time, so you need to plan ahead, especially if you are thawing a big roast, or if you've frozen multiple steaks in a single package. How Long Does Frozen Meat Take to Defrost in the Fridge? A single layer package of lamb chops or a package of ground beef, for example, might take up to a day to fully thaw in the fridge, and a 4 pound roast or a large package of steaks could require two days, even more if it's very large piece of meat, like a big pork shoulder. Once defrosted, the meat can stay in the fridge for another day or two, provided it was frozen while quite fresh. Ground meat should be used within a day. Quick Thawing Meat in Water Frozen meat can be placed tightly sealed (either in vacuum sealed bags or sturdy, freezer proof, zipper-top storage bags) in a bowl of lukewarm or tepid water, no more than 100°F. Do NOT use hot water! Besides possibly causing bacteria to form, warm water will also start to "cook" the outside of the meat before the middle is thawed). Change the water every 30 to 45 minutes to make sure the water stays cold, or place the bowl of water under a rapidly dripping faucet with water at the same temperature to keep the water circulating which speeds the process a bit. How Long Does Quick Thawing Meat in Water Take? Ground meat might thaw in an hour, a 1-inch thick or so steak will probably thaw in 1 to 2 hours, larger amounts and bigger cuts may take a few hours. If you are thawing multiple pieces of meat in a bag, once the individual pieces have thawed enough to be separated, open the bag, pull the pieces apart, then resealed the bag (make sure it's sealed tightly!) and return it to the water. This will speed up the process and allow the meat to thaw more evenly. Keep checking and changing the water; once the meat is thawed using the quick thaw in water method it should be cooked right away. Don't put it back in the fridge, and do not refreeze. Mediterranean Pork Tenderloin with Roasted Vegetables Thawing Meat in a Microwave These days many microwaves have special settings for thawing meat (and lots of other items), and your instruction manual will help you figure out the best way to do that in your particular microwave. It may even have specific directions for specific cuts of meat, which are very helpful in preventing the meat from starting to cook in the microwave. If not, here's how to safely thaw meat in the microwave. Place the meat in a microwave proof bag or place it on a plate. Set the microwave to defrost, and then check every few minutes to see when it is thawed properly. If you don't have a rotating tray, you will want to keep turning the plate every minute or so, and even if you do have a rotating tray, you may need to rearrange the meat if you are defrosting multiple pieces, as the ones on the outside will heat faster than the ones in the middle. Switch them partway through the thawing process. Remove individual pieces of meat as they are thawed. Even if you are watching carefully, the thinner parts of the meat will probably start to cook a bit while the thicker parts are still thawing. Meat thawed in the microwave should not be stored back in the fridge, but needs to be cooked right away. All the methods you need to know for defrosting frozen meat safely, from chops to ground beef to roasts. Tweet This Moroccan Lamb and Butternut Squash Stew Cooking Frozen Meat You can cook some meat in its frozen state. The general rule of thumb is to add another 50% of cooking time from the time suggested in the recipe. Smaller cuts of meat work best, such as stew meat, or thinly sliced meat. Slower cooking methods are best when you are cooking frozen meat—the meat does better texture wise in the slow cooker, in a braised recipe, when cooked in soups and stews. Other cooking methods (like sautéing, roasting, or microwaving) may yield slightly uneven results, with the outside of the chicken cooked more than the inside, or a less-than ideal texture. As the meat thaws it releases moisture, which again is ok in the slower cooking methods that involve liquid, but not so great for things like searing or sautéing. Here you will not be able to get a nice browned exterior because the meat will be kind of steaming in its released water. Also see How to Safely Thaw Frozen Chicken! Roast Eye of Round Beef with Thyme and Rosemary Thawing meat has never been so easy, even for the most careless cooks; just follow our advice. It happens very often to return home after a long day of work and find that you have not taken the meat out of the freezer. Result? The meat is still frozen and dinner will not be ready in a few minutes as planned. How to save the dinner in this cases? There are three very simple ways to thaw meat without affecting the flavour and aroma. 1. The pot upside down Put the frozen meat in a sealed plastic bag, place an upside-down pot in the sink, place the meat on the bottom of the pot and put another pan full of hot water on top. The pressure of the water in the pan and the heat will ensure that the meat thaws in record time! After 5 minutes, the steak will be ready to be cooked in the pan. 2. The pot with hot water Put the meat in a hermetically sealed plastic bag (each slice of meat should be placed in a single bag) and in the meantime heat the water in a pot. Once the first bubbles appear, turn off the heat and insert the bag with the meat to defrost, then let it rest for about 10 minutes. After the necessary time, remove the bag from the water and dry the meat with absorbent paper. 3. The microwave The last method, among the three best known and used, is that of the microwave oven. Almost all models have a function that allows you to defrost the food quite quickly. In general, the microwave is an excellent ally in the kitchen, especially when you don't have time to stand in front of the stove. As for the timing, they change depending on the individual appliances, but it won't take more than 10 minutes. Do you want to get dinner ready quickly? Here are four fast and easy ways to defrost meat safely. Learn how to defrost ground beef and thaw steak fast.Let's talk about defrosting meat. This isn't a very glamorous topic, but it's an essential nuts-and-bolts topic that every home cook needs to know. If you've ever had questions like how to defrost ground beef, how to thaw steak fast, or can you thaw and re-freeze meat, this post is for you. One of the big benefits of buying beef in bulk from a farmer is having a freezer stocked with ground beef, well marbled steaks, and roasts. If you know how to thaw and defrost meat quickly, it makes it even easier to throw together a quick weeknight meal. Did you buy meat fresh or frozen?Even though our beef is straight-off the farm, we only sell it frozen. This surprises some people, but the reason we do is because of food safety.Our beef is always fully-processed, inspected, packaged and frozen when we pick it up from the USDA beef processor. Our processor freezes it immediately after being cut and packaged because frozen foods remain safe indefinitely, whereas room-temperature meat could start to grow bacteria surprisingly quickly. So, when we pick it up from them it's frozen, and we keep it frozen until we deliver it to you.If you buy meat that's not frozen and you don't plan to eat it right away, we recommend freezing it when you get home. It will help the meat last longer, and it's easy to thaw meat fast.4 fast, easy and safe ways to defrost meatPlease note, all of these recommendations come from the USDA's Food Safety & Inspection Services. #1. Refrigerator thawing (the best method)This is our go-to method for defrosting meat, especially beef. It's what we recommend as long as you have a little time to spare.Place beef in a container and in the refrigerator. It will thaw in 8+ hours, depending on the cut of beef. For us, that means we often put a pound of hamburger or a few steaks in the refrigerator before leaving for work. It's then thawed by the time we're home and ready to make dinner.One of the best parts of refrigerator thawing is that the thawed beef can stay in the refrigerator for about 3 days. And if you change your mind on a meal, you can always refreeze the beef without cooking it.A pound of hamburger takes about 9 hours to thaw in the refrigerator, and a roast will take 24+ hours to thaw. #2. Cold-water thawing (this is how to defrost ground beef and how to thaw steak fast)This is our second favorite method. We use cold-water thawing whenever we haven't planned ahead and don't have time to do refrigerator thawing. Thankfully, cold-water thawing is very easy to do.Simply, place cold water in a bowl or pan and submerge your beef in the water until it's thawed. Make sure the water is cold, not hot.In order to make sure the water stays cold while the beef is thawing, you can place the bowl under a faucet and let cold water trickle on it as it thaws.If you don't like the idea of leaving your faucet on, you can also change the cold water bath every 30 minutes so that the water remains cold and the meat keeps thawing.#3. Microwave thawingThis is our least favorite method. We don't like it since the beef usually starts to cook a little while you're trying to thaw it. Only use this method if it's a must.That said, thawing with a microwave does get points for being the fastest method. Simply press the defrost button and monitor your meat closely so that it doesn't start to cook.Also, make sure you plan to cook the beef immediately after microwaving for food safety reasons. Unlike the refrigerator thawing method, you cannot refreeze meat that has been thawed in a microwave.#4. Cook it frozenYes, you can cook frozen meat! You'll love the results. We do it all the time with just about every cut of beef — from grilling steaks to cooking roasts in the crockpot.In fact, some studies show that grilling steaks from frozen can be even better than traditional cooking methods.The biggest thing to remember if you do this is that the cooking time will take approximately 50% longer, and you will want to closely monitor the temperature with an instant read thermometer.What not to do when defrosting meatYou have lots of options defrosting meat, but there is one thing you should never do. Don't ever thaw meat at room temperature. According to the USDA, "perishable foods should never be thawed on the counter, or in hot water and must not be left at room temperature for more than two hours.Even though the center of the package may still be frozen as it thaws on the counter, the outer layer of the food could be in the "Danger Zone," between 40 and 140 °F — temperatures where bacteria multiply rapidly."Can you thaw and refreeze meat?Did you change your mind on what you're having for dinner, and you want to refreeze the meat? You can, depending on how you thawed the meat.Refrigerator thawing: Meat thawed in the refrigerator is safe to refreezeCold water thawing: Meat thawed by cold water thawing should be cooked before refreezingMicrowave thawing: Meat thawed in the microwave should be cooked before refreezingOne more thing! eBook & farm updatesDid you know we have an entire eBook about beef that goes through purchasing and preparing beef from a farmers perspective. Get it here.If you'd like to keep up with our farm, we have a weekly e-newsletter where we share about farm happenings, beef recipes, and when our next beef will be available to order. When you sign up, you'll get a cheat sheet with 9-must-ask questions before buying beef directly from a farmer.Other beef posts you'll lovePin it for later!

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