How To Handle and Prepare Your Frozen Produce

Frozen vegetables are different from frozen fruits: one needs to be cooked, one does not...

Definition: Slacking is the slow, gradual increase of product temperature until it's in a partially frozen state.

Do’s
- Thaw (slack) frozen fruit in your refrigerator…
  - At 5°C (41°F) or less
  - Protect product from contamination
  - Cover and always store above raw meat, poultry, eggs or fish
- Wear gloves and/or use clean and sanitized utensils to handle frozen, slacked and thawed fruit

Don’ts
- Don’t slack at room temperature on…
  - The counter
  - Service line
  - In a steam table
- Don’t store below raw meat, poultry, eggs or fish

DID YOU KNOW?
You can control costs and reduce food waste by re-freezing slackened fruit

Frozen Fruits

Do’s
- Thaw (slack) frozen fruit in your refrigerator…
  - At 5°C (41°F) or less
  - Protect product from contamination
  - Cover and always store above raw meat, poultry, eggs or fish
- Wear gloves and/or use clean and sanitized utensils to handle frozen, slacked and thawed fruit

Don’ts
- Don’t slack at room temperature on…
  - The counter
  - Service line
  - In a steam table
- Don’t store below raw meat, poultry, eggs or fish

Frozen Vegetables

Do’s (for hot holding)
- Cook frozen potatoes and vegetables from a frozen state
- Cook to at least 135°F or above (follow packaged cooking instructions if available)
- Wear clean gloves and use clean and sanitized utensils to handle cooked vegetables

Do’s (for cold holding)
- Cook frozen potatoes and vegetables from a frozen state
- Cook to at least 165°F or follow packaged cooking instructions (if available)
- Wear gloves and use clean and sanitized utensils to handle cooked vegetables
- For cold holding, cool cooked vegetables until reaches 41°F or below

How to cool cooked vegetables...
- Refrigerate in shallow pan protecting the product from contamination until it reaches 41°F or below within six hours (Model Food Code requires product reaches 70°F within two hours, 41°F within four hours)
- Use clean colander and spray with running potable water until it reaches 41°F or below

Don’t
- Don’t cool cooked vegetables at room temperature
- Don’t slack and serve frozen vegetables
- Don’t use frozen vegetables as a means to reduce the temperature of a recipe
- Don’t use frozen vegetables as an ingredient in ready to serve food (burrito)

EXAMPLES:
- Don’t put frozen vegetables like frozen corn or peas into salsa or salads without cooking first
- Frozen fries on counter – directly into fryer

Follow elements of FDA’s Food Code recommendations pertaining to safe food handling and employee health and hygiene.
For more information, please visit AFFIFoodSafety.org or Foodsafetyfocus.com