

# Quicker in the kitchen



>> Waiting endlessly for butter to thaw can be a damper if you want to bake a cake in a jiffy to satisfy unexpected cravings. Grate frozen butter and it will melt almost instantly!

It's hard to make healthy meals and still retain your sanity, especially if you've got a large family to look after. Whether you're cooking for one or five, these kitchen tips will help, says **Rhea Dhanbhoora**

**Y**ou know how painful it is to go through an entire day at work or even taking care of the children at home and then cook a delicious meal. If you're single, you're going to be tempted to rely on pre-cooked meals and junk food and if you're a busy mum, takeouts and home delivery are tempting when you're tired. But, by switching up a few things in your kitchen and buying a really big freezer (we're not kidding, it's the most important part of your kitchen!), you can make cooking a quick, simple and fun task. Take a look:

## USE PRE-MIXES

We know that ginger-garlic paste tastes best fresh, as do chili pastes, chutneys and pesto. But, it's always a good idea to buy a few packets/ bottles of pre-mixes. This way, when you're too tired to cook, you don't have to compromise with a bad meal.

## MAKE IT INTO ICE

Store sorbets and cubes of wine so that when you need them in your cooking, you don't have to look for an entire bottle. A trend we love is to chop up herbs with olive oil and freeze them in ice trays. This helps add a herby punch to your dishes, even when you're all out of fresh herbs! They taste a lot better than the dried variety too.

## PEEL IT QUICKER

You get pre-peeled garlic and ginger, so we suggest you buy and store those. But, you can also make peeling fresh garlic and ginger easier. For ginger, skip the peeler and use a spoon to scrape off the skin. For garlic, warm them slightly (very slightly, don't cook them!) and the skin will slip off on its own.

## FREEZE & STORE

It's a good idea to freeze and store meat

(chicken, fish, etc.) in bulk rather than having to run to buy some every time you need it. The easiest thing to do is separate the chicken, meat or fish according to how you cook it — small pieces for curries, legs for quick dinner, breast pieces for roulades, boneless cuts for pastas and salads and so on. Freeze them in separate bags and you'll cut down your time in the store and kitchen.

## BUTTER IT UP

So, your family has a cake craving and you're ready to pop a quick sponge in the oven. But, waiting for the butter to thaw can be a problem. Here's a quick tip — grate the butter into your dry ingredients as it softens much quicker this way! So you can make pies, cookies and cakes without waiting hours for frozen butter to thaw.

## SMOOTHER SMOOTHIES

Don't have time to make yourself a smoothie? That's not a good enough excuse not to include it in your diet. Make it easier by cutting fruit and vegetables and freezing them in zip lock bags. Then for the rest of the week, you have smoothie packs ready to mix with water or milk for a healthy drink in a jiffy.

## STORE MARINADE

Some people freeze marinated meat, but if you're wary of defrosted water mixed with marinade to cook it, this is a better idea. Make smaller packets/boxes of the marinades and curry masalas that you use most often. It might take one entire weekend to do it all, but it will make the rest of your month much easier.

## COOK IN ADVANCE

We know this is beginning to sound like more work, but we promise it will help. Every time you cook something new (rice,

daal or even soup), cook it in double or triple quantity and freeze it. This is great for when you need a meal in a hurry.

## CHAPATIS IN A HURRY

This is really important for Indian families. Chapatis are a staple of every meal and more often than not, you'll be cooking a fresh batch to avoid staleness. Want a quick-fix secret? Wrap them in cloth and store them in an air tight container. Then, when you need to serve them, just put as many as you require in the cooker for two whistles and you've got fresh, hot chapattis.

## USE SCISSORS

Get scissors that can quickly cut through chicken skin, cut up little herbs and if they can crack nuts too — you'll never need anything else!

## SQUEEZE IT OUT

We love squeeze bottles. You can store your sauces in them to squeeze into dishes, icing to top cakes and cookies with and even dressings for quick salads without any fuss or mess. All you need to do is shake up the bottle and you're ready to go.

## CRISPY FRIES

Don't want to compromise with packet fries that never taste of real potato? Here's an easy fix. Cut up potatoes into strips and store them in plastic wrap in the freezer. The best part about this is that if you fry them frozen, you'll actually get crisper fries than usual.

## CUT DEFROSTING TIME

One quick way to defrost meat is to run it under water. But, if you want to save water, you can instead place it on anything aluminum. It helps thaw meat much faster.

## « MY BABY & ME MOBILE APPLICATION

Baby brand Libero recently introduced a mobile application to help parents with their babies. **Priyanka Singh** tells you more about it

**S**wedish brand Libero, was created about 30 years ago. The baby care brand is now in the Indian market and offers a full range of baby diapers and toiletries. The Libero baby care range comes with skin-friendly natural ingredients which are good for a baby's healthy skin, which is a key concern for mothers in India. In order to add an virtual dimension to their brand, they have launched a new mobile application called My Baby & Me.



The My Baby & Me mobile application is a mother's companion during her journey from a would-be mother to becoming an actual mother. The app lets expectant mothers track the progress of their pregnancy with the built-in pregnancy tracker and also avail weekly tips on having a healthy motherhood.

Especially beneficial for working parents, this application will assist them in remembering important dates regarding their baby's health, appointments with the doctor and information on their baby's normal weekly/monthly physical growth, health and immunisation. Designed in a very easy-to-use layout, the application is divided into two main sections — pregnant and baby care. For minor pregnancy related queries and remembering important things related to your little one, this free application can be really helpful.