

# K's Kitchen: Frozen foods have history that dates to 1000 BC

By Kathryn Reed

When I first heard this is national Frozen Food month I didn't think much about it. I didn't think I ate many frozen foods.



Then I looked in the freezer. For the most part it's leftovers that are in there. There's also coffee, tater tots, butter, chocolate chips and fake hamburgers. From last summer's farmers' market I made pesto and have that frozen to use all winter, as well as tomatoes that I had bought at the market, stewed and now have in the freezer.

Then it made me think about the old icebox I have in my office that instead of having cold food stores my cold weather clothing. It's hard to imagine living when there weren't freezers like we know them.

Either there was a lot of wasted food in years gone by or people cooked more efficiently than I do. But I absolutely love leftovers.

It was Clarence Birdseye who in 1924 began freezing foods as we think of frozen foods today. He used a quick freezing method that eliminated the slower freezing technique that caused ice crystals to form on food.

The National Frozen & Refrigerated Foods Association says, "The first to harness the power of freezing foods beyond the winter months were the Chinese, who used ice cellars as early as 1000 B.C. The Greeks and Romans stored compressed snow in

insulated cellars, and the Egyptians and Indians discovered that rapid evaporation through the porous walls of clay vessels produced ice crystals in the water inside the vessels.”

According to the USDA, food stored at zero degrees is safe because it inactivates any microbes – bacteria, yeasts and molds. Nutrients are not lost.

The Department of Agriculture folks also say, “Freezer burn does not make food unsafe, merely dry in spots. It appears as grayish-brown leathery spots and is caused by air coming in contact with the surface of the food. Cut freezer-burned portions away either before or after cooking the food. Heavily freezer-burned foods may have to be discarded for quality reasons.”

Next time I shop in the frozen food section or pull something out of the freezer, I won't take it for granted.