

FREEZE and Thaw

Streamline Holiday Bakery Operations with Smart Freezing and Thawing

When the freezing process is handled correctly, storing partially or fully finished baked goods to defrost and sell at a later date can greatly benefit bakery operations. It helps spread out bakers' workload, reduces the number of sensitive components that need to be managed in the kitchen at once and often prevents waste. These benefits are particularly valuable during the holiday season, when many bakeries see the highest number of orders and potential for profit, and efficiency is at a premium. Bakers can work ahead this fall and won't have to worry about making all their holiday offerings during the weeks around Christmas and New Year's.

A number of things, however, can go wrong during the freezing process—possibly resulting in lost time and ingredients, inferior bakery products and other costly outcomes. To avoid frustrating errors and delays, follow these five tips.

Choose Items that Freeze Well

Some fully baked goods perform better than others in subzero temperatures. Cakes and pies, for instance, freeze and thaw better than Danishes with a flaky, crispy texture, according to Dan Troop, technical sales representative at Dawn Foods.

"A freezer can be a baker's best friend," Troop says. "When [it starts to] pull moisture out of the product, it's now in the air. A product like a cake will immediately start to pick up that moisture and actually become [moister]. If I put a sheet cake in the freezer on Monday and pull it out Friday, it's going to be a better, [moister] cake than [a] sheet cake [I just baked] Friday morning."

Baked goods like donuts can be a bit trickier to work with in freezing temperatures—particularly if they've been iced, according to Troop. However, an unglazed, icing-free ring donut can be frozen, he says. The key is to ensure it stays frozen until you're ready to defrost it completely. That can be hard if you're transferring frozen donuts from one place to another, such as a temperature-controlled truck to a bakery freezer.

The key is to minimize the amount of time the donuts are out of a freezing environment as much as possible. "You can't [let a box sit for] 45 minutes," Troop says. "Because it starts to defrost like [a] bag of peas; and when you [then] put it in the holding freezer, it freezes again. It really gets to be a problem."

When donuts that have been frozen correctly are ready for use, they can be removed and placed in the oven for about a minute to prepare them for a coating.

"Get the surface oils hot," Troop says. "Run it underneath the glaze, and you've got a perfect glazed donut. That works out just splendid. But I couldn't glaze the donut, then freeze it and bring it out [to defrost it] because you could get sweating."

One way to ensure success with products like donuts is to use mixes and bases that are both freeze- and thaw-stable. Dawn's Extended Shelf Life Donut Mix is made with advanced enzyme technology that helps trap moisture in baked goods, giving them a fresher appearance and ensuring they last longer.

Seal Items Effectively

Baked goods that will be frozen longer than 10 days should be put in airtight containers to keep them from drying out.

"All freezers are dehumidifiers," Troop says. If donuts are placed in a bag that's not completely sealed, then boxed and placed in the freezer, "that freezer will pull the moisture right through that box and bag because it's not sealed," he says.

Choose the Best Chilling Method for Bakery Operations

Keeping frozen products at a consistent -10 degrees Fahrenheit is key to maintain their integrity.

Most smaller bakeries can do this effectively with static freezing: Items are placed in a box that's put into a case. The case is sealed and stacked onto a pallet that's put in a standard freezer.

Larger bakeries with multiple locations, wholesale operations and baked goods manufacturers are more likely to benefit from tunnel freezing, a process that involves nitrogen or carbon dioxide.

"[In] a tunnel freezer, you put [something] in one end, and a minute and a half later, it comes out the other end -10 on the inside," Troop says.

Invest in a Temperature-Gauging Tool

Though freezers have settings, using a certified and calibrated thermometer provides precision, ensuring bakeries are storing frozen items at the necessary temperature.

"Do a weekly check," Troop says. "Make sure when the freezer says it's -10, it's really not 32."

Seek Thawing Guidance from Suppliers

Different products require different defrosting methods to ensure when they're thawed, they have the right texture and consistency.

"Find out from the supplier if an item should be defrosted slowly, through refrigeration overnight, over a period of a couple days—or if it can be thawed at room temperature overnight for the next day of production," Troop says.

From mixes and bases to fillings, icings and glazes, discover how Dawn bakery products can help your business save time, ensure consistency and maximize efficiency this holiday season and beyond.

