

The Absolute Best Ways To Keep Bagels Fresh

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Is there anything better than a hot bagel fresh and waiting for you? Whether you like your bagels toasted or plain, capped with a thick layer of cream cheese, or just barely touched with a swipe of butter, there's no debating the fact that these round, bready wonders taste best on the day they're made.

But when you've picked up a dozen of your favorite sesames, blueberries, or everypings, it's more than likely that a few stragglers will remain even after you've feasted to fullness at brunch. All too often, leftover bagels seem to go from chewy to rock hard overnight, or at least in the course of a few days (via The Bagel Club). The good news is that though staleness is inevitable, you have a few options for keeping it at bay for as long as possible. So when you're faced with the admittedly enviable dilemma of leftover bagels, here are the absolute best ways to keep them fresh.

In a Ziploc bag at room temperature

When you find yourself with some leftover bagels, the first thing you'll want to remember is to avoid storing them in the refrigerator. Although this handy appliance is adept at extending the shelf life of many of our favorite foods, it actually works against the freshness of bagels, causing them to go stale even faster (via Serious Eats).

One method that works well for storing bagels is to immediately transfer the completely cooled, whole bagels into a sealed plastic storage bag, squeezing out any excess air, and leaving the bag at room temperature, where the bagels will keep for up to three days (via Does It Go Bad?). While this method works to lock moisture into the bagels, keeping them soft, it will likely cause the chewy crust to go soft, too — but the crust will come back to life when you slice and toast the bagels (via Does It Go Bad?).

Like other breads, bagels take extremely well to freezing, losing a minimum amount of moisture and coming back to life quite well once reheated or toasted. There are various schools of thought on how to best prepare a bagel for freezing, but a method suggested by The Spruce Eats recommends pre-slicing bagels, transferring them to a plastic storage bag — preferably freezer-grade — squeezing out the air, and freezing them. Frozen bagels will keep for up to four months, and they can go straight into the toaster oven — no thawing required — since they're already sliced in half (via The Spruce Eats).

Meanwhile, a tip from The Rachael Ray Show goes even further, locking in freshness by wrapping each bagel half in plastic wrap or parchment paper before stacking the halves and slipping the bagels into a sealed Ziploc bag. With this method, you can easily snag just a bagel half for reheating or toasting.

Wrapped in foil and frozen

Overall, when you want to be able to store bagels for an extended period of time, freezing is hands-down the way to go. Methods for freezing vary, but one approach suggested by Serious Eats is wrapping whole — not sliced — bagels tightly in aluminum foil, which the site notes is more airtight than plastic wrap. When you're ready to enjoy your bagel, take it out of the freezer and let it sit for a few hours at room temperature, allowing it to defrost inside its foil wrapping to avoid any moisture loss. Then, proceed with your bagel reheating method of choice.

So what's the best way to reheat bagels? If you enjoy a toasted bagel, you can pop your pre-sliced bagel halves right into the toaster, whether they've fully defrosted or not (via The Spruce Eats). But if you want to recreate the experience of a freshly made bagel to the extent it's possible, Serious Eats recommends misting or dunking your defrosted whole bagel in water, then baking it in a 375-degree oven or toaster oven for a few minutes, which rehydrates the bagel and helps recreate a chewy outer crust. Happy brunching!