



Shopper's Guide

A Healthier Take on Frozen Meals



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After a long, hard day, sometimes the last thing you want to do is cook. For those times, a frozen meal fits the bill. But does choosing a processed frozen meal mean putting your healthy eating habits on hiatus? Not necessarily. As long as you know what to look for, including an occasional frozen meal in your diet is fine. In fact, prepared meals can make a healthier option than fast food or take-out, and they can be a great way to control portion size. That being said, the portions are often so small they don't provide enough calories to satisfy you. And it can also be challenging to find a well-balanced meal—containing at least one serving of vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains—in the frozen food aisle.

Look for frozen meals that provide less sodium.

As with many processed foods, sodium levels can be high in frozen meals—some have more than a half a day's worth. Fortunately more health-focused frozen food companies are hitting the freezer case and traditional companies are developing “simple” or “fit” lines. These tend to be lower in sodium while incorporating more whole foods, vegetables, and whole grains.

Helpful Hints. Before stocking your freezer with frozen meals, check out these suggestions.

- ▶ **Fill 'er Up.** To fill you up and keep you satisfied, choose a meal that contain around 300-450 calories and 10 grams of protein.
- ▶ **Round it Out.** To boost nutrient intake and provide a well-balanced meal, consider adding a salad, serving of milk or yogurt, and fresh fruit to round out the meal.
- ▶ **Salt Check.** You might get sticker shock when looking at the sodium content of many of these meals. Keep in mind that this is an entire meal, so the sodium levels may be higher than you're used to for a snack. Look for meals with no more than 700 milligrams. **EN**

—Heidi McIndoo, MS, RD

Frozen Meals Nutritional Comparison

✓ = **EN's Picks.** As with all *EN* comparisons, this is only a sampling of products. Picks contain 300-450 calories (15-23% DV), at least 10 g protein (20% DV), and no more than 5 g saturated fat (25% DV) and 700 mg sodium (30% DV).

FROZEN MEALS*	Serving Size (oz)	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Protein (g)
365 Organic Macaroni & Cheese	9	490	20	10	58	770	4	9	18
✓ 365 Organic Roasted Vegetable Lasagna	10	340	10	5	50	610	5	12	13
365 Organic Spinach Ricotta Lasagna	10	440	22	13	41	550	3	8	19
Amy's Bowls Chili Mac	9	420	14	7	59	720	3	3	15
Amy's Indian Vegetable Korma	9.5	310	12	3.5	41	680	7	7	9
Amy's Light & Lean Quinoa & Black Beans with Butternut Squash & Chard	8	240	5	0.5	38	440	11	6	10
Amy's Light & Lean Sweet & Sour Asian Noodles	8	250	3	0	46	610	3	10	10
Banquet Salisbury Steak Meal	8	300	18	6	21	1110	3	3	13
Blake's Farmhouse Mac & Cheese	8	370	18	5	45	480	4	0	7
✓ Blake's Farmhouse Mac & Cheese with Chicken	8	360	17	5	34	320	3	5	18
Boston Market Smothered Turkey	14	440	12	4	57	1540	3	8	28
Devour Pulled Chicken Burrito Bowl	12	450	15	8	46	950	8	6	32
Evol Chipotle Chicken Mac & Cheese	8	430	19	10	46	760	3	6	19
Evol Cilantro Lime Chicken Enchiladas	9.74	410	16	6	46	610	6	4	19
✓ Evol Fire Grilled Steak	9	400	18	4	40	520	8	3	20
Evol Lean & Fit Teriyaki Chicken	9	290	3	0.5	50	600	4	12	14
✓ Healthy Choice Café Steamers Crustless Chicken Pot Pie	9.6	300	6	2	40	600	3	4	21
Healthy Choice Simply Steamers Honey Balsamic Chicken	9.9	210	2.5	0.5	28	490	6	9	19
Hungry Man Country Fried Steak	16	580	22	7	77	1400	5	19	19
Lean Cuisine Comfort Meatloaf with Mashed Potatoes	9.4	240	7	3.5	25	850	3	4	20
Lean Cuisine Favorites Asian Style Potstickers	9	280	4	1	52	530	3	9	9
✓ Lean Cuisine Marketplace Tortilla Crusted Fish	8	300	9	2	41	490	2	6	14
Marie Callender's Delights Roast Turkey & Sweet Potato Stuffing	10.5	260	4.5	2	33	920	6	15	21
✓ Michael Angelo's Chicken Parmesan	10	350	6	2.5	47	670	7	8	25
Michael Angelo's Eggplant Parmesan	10	260	11	6	23	720	5	6	18
Michael Angelo's Lasagna with Meat Sauce	10	390	16	7	38	630	6	9	24
✓ Saffron Road Beef Bulgogi	10	330	12	2	41	590	4	9	18
✓ Saffron Road Chicken Tikka Masala	10	310	8	1.5	53	690	2	5	16
Saffron Road Palak Paneer	10	460	21	11	50	680	4	3	17
Saffron Road Thai Red Curry Fish	9	220	3	2	35	510	4	5	14
Smart Made by Smart Ones Chicken with Spinach & Fettuccine	9	220	6	3	19	630	2	4	22
Smart Ones Pasta with Swedish Meatballs	9.1	290	7	2.5	38	730	5	7	18
Stouffers Fit Kitchen Bowls Beef with Broccoli	12	370	9	3	50	930	4	10	21
Stouffers Macaroni & Cheese with Broccoli	12	420	18	9	46	1070	3	5	19
✓ Trader Joe's Cod Provencale	12.3	400	2	2.5	29	340	4	3	24
Trader Joe's Greens, Beans and Grains	9	280	8	1.5	40	390	7	4	11
Trader Joe's Reduced Guilt Mac & Cheese	7	270	6	3.5	40	540	1	4	15
✓ Trader Joe's Ricotta & Spinach Tortelloni	10.6	460	24	5	46	700	5	8	14
Trader Joe's Vegetable Pad Thai	10.5	520	2	8	74	830	6	29	9
✓ Trader Joe's Wild Salmon in Yogurt & Mint Sauce	12.3	350	10	3.5	34	310	3	3	24

*Based on 1 individual serving size frozen meal. Note: g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value, Daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: product labels and manufacturer website.