

Healthy kitchen essential: The vacuum sealer

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(HealthDay)—If you're looking for a cooking shortcut and a way to make food more economical, consider vacuum sealing.

With a vacuum sealer, you can extend the storage life of foods by measuring out the right portion sizes and sealing them in handy bags, either premade or made by you from a roll of special plastic.

Vacuum-sealed foods won't leak in the fridge or develop freezer burn in the freezer. Using a [food](#) sealing system extends the life of fresh food, inhibits the growth of bacteria, and even gives you extra cold-storage space because the sealed packages are more compact than supermarket packaging. You can easily use the poaching technique called sous-vide and [cook](#) food right in its bag. The sealed bags are also great for marinating.

For a traditional marinated and grilled flank steak, save prep time by making two meals at once, one to eat today and another to freeze. The flank steak cut usually weighs 1.5 to 2 pounds, more than you need when cooking for just two people.

So grab (or make) two sealer bags and mark the one for the freezer "Balsamic Flank Steak." Add the date. To each bag, add 2 tablespoons each of balsamic vinegar, [soy sauce](#) and [olive oil](#); a tablespoon of chopped fresh rosemary; a teaspoon of Dijon-style mustard; and a 1/4 teaspoon of garlic salt, and stir. Add a piece of the steak to each bag and seal according to your vacuum sealer's directions. Put the labeled bag in the [freezer](#) for a future meal—the meat will be fully prepped when you defrost it. Put the other bag in the fridge to marinate for at least 4 hours. Before cooking, remove [steak](#) from the bag and drain on paper towels. Prep your indoor or outdoor grill with cooking spray and cook, turning meat often until it browns but is still pink in the center when sliced, about 10 to 15 minutes. Rest on a cutting board for 5 minutes to redistribute the juices, then slice, serve and enjoy.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has a helpful chart on [safe fridge and freezer storage](#) with time limits for meat

and other foods.

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