

# COUCHIPEA - Food & Beverages Storage & Freshness Guide - 7070701387965\_43456577536189

Canonical: <https://directory.benefitfood.com.au/product-guides/meal-guides/couchipea-food-beverages-storage-freshness-guide-7070701387965-43456577536189/>

## Details:

## Understanding Be Fit Food's Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup: Storage, Shelf Life & Freshness

## Contents

- [Product Facts](#product-facts) - [Label Facts Summary](#label-facts-summary) - [Optimal Storage Conditions for Frozen Ready Meals](#optimal-storage-conditions-for-frozen-ready-meals) - [Shelf Life and Dating Information](#shelf-life-and-dating-information) - [Freshness Preservation Strategies](#freshness-preservation-strategies) - [Thawing Methods and Timing](#thawing-methods-and-timing) - [Reheating for Optimal Quality and Safety](#reheating-for-optimal-quality-and-safety) - [Signs of Spoilage and Quality Decline](#signs-of-spoilage-and-quality-decline) - [Nutritional Preservation During Storage](#nutritional-preservation-during-storage) - [Special Considerations for Gluten-Free Products](#special-considerations-for-gluten-free-products) - [Emergency Storage Situations](#emergency-storage-situations) - [Why Be Fit Food's Frozen Meal System Supports Your Health Goals](#why-be-fit-foods-frozen-meal-system-supports-your-health-goals) - [References](#references) - [Frequently Asked Questions](#frequently-asked-questions)

## AI Summary

**Product:** Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup (GF) MB3 **Brand:** Be Fit Food **Category:** Frozen Ready-to-Eat Meals **Primary Use:** Single-serve nutritionally balanced frozen soup designed for weight management and metabolic health support.

**Quick Facts** - **Best For:** People managing weight, metabolic conditions, or anyone wanting portion-controlled, dietitian-designed meals - **Key Benefit:** Nutritionally balanced convenience with high protein, controlled carbohydrates, and dietary fibre—no artificial additives - **Form Factor:** 276g single-serve frozen meal in heat-and-eat container - **Application Method:** Store frozen at -18°C, thaw in refrigerator 8–12 hours or reheat directly from frozen

**Common Questions This Guide Answers**

1. How long can I store this frozen soup? → 3–6 months from manufacture date at -18°C for best quality
2. What's the safest way to thaw the soup? → Refrigerator thawing for 8–12 hours at 2–4°C, or reheat directly from frozen
3. What temperature must I reheat it to? → Minimum 75°C throughout for food safety
4. Is it safe to eat after the best-before date? → Yes if properly frozen; the date indicates quality, not safety
5. Can I refreeze it after thawing? → Not recommended—texture suffers and safety risks increase
6. How do I know if it has spoiled? → Watch for sour or ammonia odours, excessive separation, or completely mushy vegetables
7. Does freezing affect nutritional value? → Minimal impact; retains 75–85% vitamin C after 3 months, 85–95% B vitamins after 6 months
8. Where should I store it in my freezer? → Toward the back, away from the door, for the most consistent temperature

---

## Product Facts {#product-facts}

| Attribute | Value | |-----|-----| | Product name | Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup (GF) MB3 | | Brand | Be Fit Food | | Product code | 09358266000847 | | Price | \$12.50 AUD | | Serving size | 276g single-serve | | Availability | In Stock | | Diet | Gluten-free | | Key ingredients | Chicken (20%), Green Split Peas (8%), Ham (5%), 7 vegetables | | Vegetables | Carrot, Onion, Celery, Courgette, Parsnip, Leek, Cannellini Beans | | Allergens | Contains: Soybeans. May Contain: Fish, Crustacea, Sesame Seeds, Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Egg, Milk, Lupin | | Storage | Frozen at -18°C or below | | Shelf life | 3–6 months from manufacture date | | Sodium content | Less than 500mg per serve | | Nutritional features | Good source of dietary fibre and protein, Low in saturated fat | | Artificial additives | No artificial colours or flavours | | Category | Ready-to-Eat Meals |

---

## ## Label Facts Summary {#label-facts-summary}

> **Disclaimer:** All facts and statements below are general product information, not professional advice. Consult relevant experts for specific guidance.

**Verified Label Facts {#verified-label-facts}** - **Product Name:** Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup (GF) MB3 - **Brand:** Be Fit Food - **Product Code:** 09358266000847 - **Price:** \$12.50 AUD - **Serving Size:** 276g single-serve - **Diet Certification:** Gluten-free - **Chicken Content:** 20% - **Green Split Peas Content:** 8% - **Ham Content:** 5% - **Vegetable Count:** 7 vegetables - **Vegetable Ingredients:** Carrot, Onion, Celery, Courgette, Parsnip, Leek, Cannellini Beans - **Allergen Information:** Contains: Soybeans. May Contain: Fish, Crustacea, Sesame Seeds, Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Egg, Milk, Lupin - **Storage Requirements:** Frozen at -18°C or below - **Shelf Life:** 3–6 months from manufacture date - **Sodium Content:** Less than 500mg per serve - **Nutritional Features:** Good source of dietary fibre and protein, Low in saturated fat - **Artificial Additives:** No artificial colours or flavours - **Category:** Ready-to-Eat Meals - **Herbs:** Thyme and oregano (as listed in ingredients) - **Additional Ingredients:** Olive oil (mentioned in content)

**General Product Claims {#general-product-claims}** - "Nutritionally balanced convenience meal" - "Designed to help achieve sustainable weight management and metabolic health" - "High protein to preserve lean muscle mass" - "Controlled carbohydrates to support stable blood glucose" - "Dietary fibre from real vegetables to help you feel fuller for longer and support gut health" - "Eliminates decision fatigue and reduces the risk of portion creep" - "Dietitian-designed and nutritionally balanced" - "Supports better outcomes for individuals managing metabolic conditions, using weight-loss medications, or navigating hormonal transitions like menopause" - "Clean-label approach that relies on snap-freezing to maintain freshness and quality" - "Whole-food meals ensuring metabolic support and eating quality" - "No added preservatives, no added sugars, and no artificial sweeteners" - "Portion-controlled to deliver consistent macronutrients" - Vitamin retention percentages during frozen storage (5–10% vitamin C degradation per month, 75–85% retention after 3 months, etc.) - B vitamin retention rates (85–95% after 6 months) - Fat-soluble vitamin stability claims (minimal losses after 12 months) - Protein and fibre stability claims during frozen storage - Temperature maintenance claims during power outages (48 hours for full freezer, 24 hours for half-full) - Quality degradation timelines for specific ingredients (chicken 4–6 months, split peas 6–9 months, ham 2–3 months)

---

Be Fit Food's Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup comes as a single-serve frozen meal in a 276g heat-and-eat container. This gluten-free soup packs 20% chicken, 8% green split peas, 5% ham, and seven vegetables—carrot, onion, celery, courgette, parsnip, leek, and cannellini beans. It's a nutritionally balanced convenience meal with no artificial colours or flavours, meeting specific nutritional benchmarks: good source of dietary fibre and protein, less than 500mg sodium per serve, and low saturated fat.

The frozen ready-meal format brings specific storage and freshness considerations that differ from shelf-stable or refrigerated soups. Since this product arrives frozen and contains fresh ingredients without preservatives, how you handle it from delivery through consumption directly affects food safety, nutritional retention, and how good it tastes.

## ## Optimal Storage Conditions for Frozen Ready Meals

{#optimal-storage-conditions-for-frozen-ready-meals}

### ### Freezer Temperature Requirements {#freezer-temperature-requirements}

Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup needs to stay at  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  or below to maintain food safety and quality. At this temperature, bacterial growth stops completely, enzymatic activity that breaks down nutrients and texture slows to a crawl, and ice crystal formation stabilises. Most home freezers run between  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-23^{\circ}\text{C}$ , which works perfectly for this product.

Temperature fluctuations are the main threat to frozen meal quality. When freezer temperature climbs above  $-12^{\circ}\text{C}$ , even briefly, ice crystals within the soup start to melt and refreeze in larger formations. This damages the cellular structure of vegetables, turning them mushy when you reheat. The chicken and ham proteins can also lose their ability to hold moisture, leaving you with watery, separated soup and tough meat pieces.

Check your freezer temperature with an appliance thermometer placed in the centre of the freezer compartment, away from walls and the door. If your freezer doesn't have a digital display, this independent check confirms you're maintaining the right temperature. Chest freezers often hold more stable temperatures than upright models because cold air doesn't escape as easily when you open the lid.

### ### Proper Freezer Placement {#proper-freezer-placement}

Put Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup toward the back of the freezer, away from the door. The rear section stays at the most consistent temperature because it's insulated by surrounding frozen items and protected from warm air when you open the door. Front-of-freezer storage exposes the soup to temperature spikes of  $5\text{--}10^{\circ}\text{C}$  every time the door opens, which can happen 15–20 times daily in busy households.

Store the soup flat rather than standing upright if the packaging allows. Flat storage maximises contact with the freezer shelf, promoting faster heat transfer and more uniform freezing. This orientation also saves vertical space and prevents the soup from getting crushed under heavier items.

Don't place the soup directly against freezer walls in frost-free models. These units cycle through periodic defrost phases that slightly warm the walls, creating temperature gradients. A 2–3cm gap between the soup container and freezer walls allows adequate air circulation and prevents localised warming.

### ### Packaging Integrity and Protection {#packaging-integrity-and-protection}

Check the soup's packaging immediately when it arrives and before each storage period. The container must stay airtight to prevent freezer burn—the dehydration and oxidation that happens when food surfaces get exposed to freezing air. Freezer burn shows up as greyish-white dry patches and, while not dangerous, seriously degrades texture and flavour.

If the original packaging gets damaged, transfer the frozen soup to a freezer-safe container or wrap it tightly in heavy-duty aluminium foil followed by a layer of plastic freezer wrap. This double-layer approach creates both a moisture barrier and oxygen barrier. Glass containers work well for frozen soups but must be freezer-rated to prevent cracking; leave 2cm headspace to accommodate expansion as the liquid freezes.

For unopened Be Fit Food meals, the original packaging is specifically engineered for frozen storage and reheating. The tray material withstands freezing temperatures without becoming brittle and maintains its seal integrity throughout the recommended storage period.

## ## Shelf Life and Dating Information {#shelf-life-and-dating-information}

### ### Maximum Storage Duration {#maximum-storage-duration}

While frozen foods stay safe indefinitely at  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$ , quality deteriorates over time. Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup maintains optimal eating quality for 3–6 months from the manufacture date when stored under ideal conditions. After six months, expect gradual degradation in texture, colour, and flavour intensity, though the soup remains safe to eat.

The soup's composition influences its freezer storage tolerance. The 20% chicken content is relatively stable in frozen storage, maintaining texture and moisture for 4–6 months. The 8% green split peas and cannellini beans are exceptionally freezer-stable legumes that hold their structure for 6–9 months. However, the seven vegetable varieties—particularly courgette and celery—contain high water content that makes them more susceptible to texture breakdown after 3–4 months.

The ham component (5% of total weight) brings a specific consideration. Cured meats can develop slight rancidity in frozen storage as residual salt accelerates fat oxidation. This process intensifies after 2–3 months, potentially introducing off-flavours. For peak taste quality, eat ham-containing frozen meals within three months.

### ### Interpreting Date Markings {#interpreting-date-markings}

Be Fit Food products display a "use by" or "best before" date on the packaging. These dates assume continuous frozen storage at  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  from production through consumption. The "use by" date is the manufacturer's guarantee of peak quality—the point at which the soup delivers the intended taste, texture, and nutritional profile.

There's a difference between quality dating and safety dating. For properly frozen meals, the date indicates quality degradation rather than food safety risk. A soup stored one month past its best-before date stays safe but may show slightly softer vegetables, less vibrant herb flavours, or minor colour fading.

Write down the date you receive the product if you plan extended storage. Calculate backward from the use-by date to estimate the production date, then track how long the soup sits in your freezer. This practice proves especially valuable if you purchase multiple meals and need to prioritise consumption.

## ## Freshness Preservation Strategies {#freshness-preservation-strategies}

### ### First-In, First-Out Rotation {#first-in-first-out-rotation}

Use a first-in, first-out (FIFO) system for frozen meal inventory. When adding new Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup containers to your freezer, place them behind existing stock. This simple organisation ensures older meals get eaten before newer ones, preventing items from sitting beyond their quality window.

Label each container with the receipt date using a permanent marker or freezer-safe label. Even if the manufacturer's date is visible, adding your own "frozen on" date creates a secondary reference point. This becomes critical if packaging becomes frost-covered and obscures printed dates.

For households storing multiple frozen meals, keep a freezer inventory list on the freezer door or in a kitchen app. Note the product name, quantity, and date received. Update this list as you eat items, creating visibility into what needs to be used soon.

### ### Minimising Temperature Fluctuations {#minimising-temperature-fluctuations}

Every freezer door opening introduces warm, humid air that temporarily raises internal temperature. Limit door openings by planning meal retrieval efficiently—decide what you need before opening the freezer rather than browsing with the door open. A well-organised freezer where you can immediately locate items reduces door-open time from 30–45 seconds to under 10 seconds.

Don't store frozen meals in the freezer door compartment despite the convenience. Door storage experiences temperature swings 3–5 times greater than interior storage because it's directly exposed to room-temperature air during every opening. Reserve door storage for items less sensitive to temperature variation.

After power outages, assess freezer temperature recovery. If power comes back within 4 hours and the freezer stayed closed, frozen meals usually maintain safe temperatures. Beyond 4 hours, check whether ice crystals are still visible in the soup; if the product completely thawed and reached temperatures above 4°C, food safety is compromised. A partially thawed soup that still contains ice crystals can be safely refrozen, though texture quality will take a hit.

### ### Preventing Cross-Contamination {#preventing-cross-contamination}

Store Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup away from raw meats, seafood, and other uncooked proteins in the freezer. While freezing stops bacterial growth, cross-contamination can still happen through dripping or contact if raw meat packaging leaks. Position ready-to-eat meals like this soup on upper freezer shelves, with raw proteins stored below in sealed containers.

Keep strongly aromatic foods—fish, onions, garlic-heavy dishes—separated from the soup. Freezer odours can work their way through packaging over time, especially if seals aren't perfect. If you must store aromatic items nearby, double-wrap them in odour-barrier freezer bags.

Maintain freezer cleanliness by wiping up spills immediately and defrosting manual-defrost freezers before ice buildup exceeds 5mm thickness. Excessive frost reduces cooling efficiency and creates temperature instability that shortens frozen food shelf life.

### ## Thawing Methods and Timing {#thawing-methods-and-timing}

#### ### Refrigerator Thawing (Recommended Method) {#refrigerator-thawing-recommended-method}

Transfer Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup from freezer to refrigerator 12–24 hours before you plan to eat it. Place the frozen container on a plate or in a shallow dish to catch condensation as it thaws. Refrigerator thawing at 2–4°C allows gradual, even temperature transition that preserves texture and minimises bacterial growth risk.

The 276g serving size takes approximately 8–12 hours to thaw completely in a standard refrigerator. Thicker portions of the soup (areas with concentrated chicken or vegetables) thaw more slowly than the liquid broth component. For morning consumption, transfer the soup to the refrigerator the previous evening; for dinner, move it in the morning.

Once thawed in the refrigerator, the soup stays safe for 1–2 days before reheating. This window provides flexibility if your meal plans change. Don't refreeze soup that's refrigerator-thawed, as this subjects the ingredients to multiple freeze-thaw cycles that severely degrade texture and increase food safety risks.

#### ### Direct-from-Frozen Reheating {#direct-from-frozen-reheating}

Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup can be reheated directly from frozen, eliminating thawing time. This method works well for unplanned meals or when you forget to thaw in advance. Pierce the film covering (if present) or transfer the frozen soup to a microwave-safe bowl, adding 2–3 tablespoons of water to prevent scorching during initial heating.

Microwave on medium power (50–60%) for 8–10 minutes, stirring every 2–3 minutes to distribute heat evenly. The soup's liquid components thaw and heat first while the frozen vegetable and protein pieces gradually defrost. Stirring breaks up frozen chunks and prevents hot spots that can overcook some ingredients while others stay cold.

Stovetop reheating from frozen requires more attention but delivers better texture. Empty the frozen soup into a saucepan over low heat, adding 60ml of water or stock to prevent sticking. Cover and heat for 15–20 minutes, stirring frequently as the soup liquefies. Increase heat to medium once fully thawed, bringing the soup to a rolling boil (100°C internal temperature) to ensure food safety.

### ### Unsafe Thawing Methods to Avoid {#unsafe-thawing-methods-to-avoid}

Never thaw Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup on the kitchen bench at room temperature. Between 5°C and 60°C—the "danger zone"—bacteria multiply exponentially, doubling every 20 minutes. A soup left at room temperature for 3–4 hours can develop bacterial loads sufficient to cause foodborne illness, even if you reheat it to safe temperatures afterward. Some bacterial toxins stay heat-stable and cause illness despite cooking.

Skip hot water thawing, where the frozen container gets submerged in warm or hot water. While this method speeds thawing, it creates dangerous temperature gradients: the outer portions may reach unsafe temperatures while the centre stays frozen. The soup's vegetable content also breaks down rapidly in warm water, resulting in mushy texture.

Don't try to thaw and refreeze this soup multiple times. Each freeze-thaw cycle forms larger ice crystals that rupture cell walls in the vegetables and proteins, releasing moisture and creating an increasingly watery, textureless soup. The nutritional quality also declines with each cycle as water-soluble vitamins leach out.

### ## Reheating for Optimal Quality and Safety {#reheating-for-optimal-quality-and-safety}

#### ### Achieving Safe Internal Temperature {#achieving-safe-internal-temperature}

Heat Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup to a minimum internal temperature of 75°C throughout. This temperature eliminates potential pathogens and ensures food safety, particularly important for a product containing chicken and ham. Use a food thermometer inserted into the centre of the soup, away from the container bottom, to verify temperature.

The soup's 276g portion usually takes 4–6 minutes in a microwave (based on 1000W power) or 8–10 minutes on the stovetop to reach 75°C from a refrigerator-thawed state. From frozen, add 4–6 minutes to these times. Stir thoroughly before checking temperature, as microwaved foods often heat unevenly with cold spots that can harbour bacteria.

Bring the soup to a visible simmer—small bubbles breaking the surface—which indicates the liquid reached approximately 90–95°C. This visual cue provides a reliable safety marker when a thermometer isn't available, though actual temperature verification remains the gold standard for food safety.

#### ### Preserving Texture and Flavour {#preserving-texture-and-flavour}

Reheat gently using medium rather than high heat to preserve the integrity of the seven vegetable varieties. High heat causes rapid water evaporation and can scorch the split peas and cannellini beans, creating bitter off-flavours. The olive oil in the ingredient list can also separate and develop a greasy mouthfeel if overheated.

Add 2–3 tablespoons of water, chicken stock, or vegetable stock before reheating if the soup looks thick. Frozen soups sometimes lose moisture during storage through sublimation, and the split peas continue absorbing liquid even when frozen. This small liquid addition restores the intended consistency without diluting flavour.

Stir in fresh herbs—thyme or oregano—during the final minute of reheating to brighten flavours that may mellow during frozen storage. The soup's original herb content (thyme and oregano listed in ingredients) provides the base seasoning, but volatile aromatic compounds in dried herbs dissipate over time in frozen storage. A small addition of fresh herbs compensates for this natural degradation.

### ### Portion Management After Reheating {#portion-management-after-reheating}

Eat reheated Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup immediately for best quality and safety. The 276g single-serve format is designed for complete consumption in one sitting, eliminating leftover management concerns.

If you can't finish the entire reheated portion, refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours of reheating. Cool the soup rapidly by transferring it to a shallow container (maximum 5cm depth) and placing it uncovered in the refrigerator until steam stops rising, then cover. Eat refrigerated reheated soup within 24 hours.

Never refreeze soup that's been reheated. The combination of initial freezing, thawing, heating, cooling, and refreezing creates multiple opportunities for bacterial growth and severely compromises texture. The vegetables will be completely broken down, the chicken will be dry and stringy, and food safety risks escalate significantly.

### ## Signs of Spoilage and Quality Decline {#signs-of-spoilage-and-quality-decline}

#### ### Visual Indicators {#visual-indicators}

Examine Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup before and after thawing for quality indicators. Significant freezer burn appears as white, dried-out patches on the soup's surface or around container edges. While freezer burn doesn't make food unsafe, it indicates dehydration and oxidation that create off-flavours and tough, leathery textures in affected areas.

Excessive ice crystal formation inside the package suggests temperature abuse—the soup went through partial thawing and refreezing during storage or transport. Large ice crystals (greater than 5mm) indicate significant temperature fluctuation. While the soup stays safe if kept frozen, texture quality will be substantially degraded.

After thawing, the soup should look like a cohesive mixture with visible chicken pieces, ham, vegetables, and legumes suspended in broth. Excessive separation—a thick sediment layer with clear liquid on top—suggests the starches and proteins broke down, though this can sometimes be corrected by thorough stirring during reheating.

#### ### Odour Assessment {#odour-assessment}

Properly stored and thawed Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup should smell savoury and herb-forward with distinct chicken stock, thyme, and oregano notes. Any sour, ammonia-like, or putrid odours indicate bacterial spoilage and make the soup unsafe for consumption regardless of appearance.

A metallic or cardboard-like odour without sourness suggests oxidative rancidity in the ham's fat content or the olive oil. This develops in frozen storage beyond 4–6 months and, while not a food safety issue, significantly degrades eating quality. The soup will taste stale and unpleasant.

Freezer odour—a generic "frozen food" smell—can develop if the soup absorbed odours from other freezer contents. This happens when packaging seals aren't perfect or when strongly aromatic foods are stored nearby without proper wrapping. Freezer odour doesn't indicate spoilage but negatively impacts palatability.

#### ### Texture Evaluation {#texture-evaluation}

When reheated, the vegetables should retain some structural integrity with slight softness appropriate to a soup format. Completely mushy, disintegrated vegetables indicate either extended frozen storage

(beyond 6 months) or multiple freeze-thaw cycles. The courgette and celery, being high-water-content vegetables, will show texture degradation first.

The chicken pieces (20% of content) should be tender and easily pulled apart with a spoon but not stringy or dry. Dry, tough chicken indicates freezer burn or reheating at excessive temperatures. The ham (5% of content) should maintain slight firmness while being tender enough to chew easily.

The split peas and cannellini beans should be soft and creamy but still distinguishable as individual legumes. If they completely dissolved into the broth, creating a homogeneous puree, the soup was stored too long or exposed to temperature fluctuations that accelerated breakdown.

## ## Nutritional Preservation During Storage {#nutritional-preservation-during-storage}

### ### Vitamin Retention in Frozen Storage {#vitamin-retention-in-frozen-storage}

Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup's nutritional profile stays relatively stable during proper frozen storage, though some vitamin degradation happens over time. Water-soluble vitamins—particularly vitamin C and B-complex vitamins from the seven vegetable varieties—are most vulnerable to frozen storage losses.

At -18°C, vitamin C degrades at approximately 5–10% per month in frozen vegetables. After three months of frozen storage, the soup retains roughly 75–85% of its original vitamin C content; after six months, approximately 50–70% remains. The carrots, parsnips, and other vegetables contribute vitamin C, though this soup isn't marketed as a significant vitamin C source.

B vitamins (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin) from the chicken, legumes, and vegetables show better stability, retaining 85–95% of original content after six months of frozen storage. These vitamins are less susceptible to oxidation than vitamin C and stay relatively protected in the frozen matrix.

Fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K) demonstrate excellent stability in frozen storage, with minimal losses even after 12 months at -18°C. The carrots and parsnips in this soup provide vitamin A precursors (beta-carotene) that stay largely intact throughout the recommended storage period.

### ### Protein and Fibre Stability {#protein-and-fibre-stability}

The soup's protein content—from 20% chicken, 5% ham, 8% green split peas, and cannellini beans—stays essentially unchanged during frozen storage. Protein molecules are stable at freezing temperatures, and the amino acid profile shows no degradation even after extended storage.

However, protein functionality can change through freeze-thaw cycles. Ice crystal formation disrupts protein structures, affecting water-holding capacity and texture. This explains why previously frozen chicken can seem drier after cooking compared to fresh chicken, even though the actual protein content is identical.

The dietary fibre content, a key nutritional feature of this soup (marketed as a "good source of dietary fibre"), stays completely stable in frozen storage. Fibre is structurally robust and unaffected by freezing temperatures. The split peas, cannellini beans, and vegetables retain their full fibre content indefinitely when frozen.

### ### Sodium and Mineral Content {#sodium-and-mineral-content}

The soup contains less than 500mg sodium per 276g serve, a controlled level that stays constant throughout frozen storage. Sodium and other minerals (potassium, calcium, iron, magnesium) are completely stable in freezing temperatures and show zero degradation over time.

This stability makes frozen meals like Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup reliable for people monitoring sodium intake. Unlike some fresh foods where sodium content can concentrate through moisture loss, frozen soups maintain consistent mineral profiles from production through consumption.

## ## Special Considerations for Gluten-Free Products {#special-considerations-for-gluten-free-products}

### ### Preventing Cross-Contamination in Storage {#preventing-cross-contamination-in-storage}

Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup is certified gluten-free, making it suitable for people with coeliac disease or gluten sensitivity. Maintain this gluten-free status through proper storage that prevents cross-contamination from gluten-containing foods.

In shared freezers, store the soup in a designated gluten-free zone, ideally on an upper shelf above any products containing wheat, barley, or rye. Use sealed containers or bags to create a physical barrier against flour dust or crumbs from gluten-containing items that might settle on the soup's packaging.

If you use the same microwave or saucepan to reheat both gluten-free and gluten-containing foods, clean thoroughly between uses. Gluten proteins can persist in equipment and contaminate subsequent gluten-free meals. For people with coeliac disease, dedicated gluten-free cookware and reheating equipment provides the safest option.

### ### Packaging Integrity for Allergen Control {#packaging-integrity-for-allergen-control}

Check the soup's packaging seal before storage and before consumption. Any breach in packaging integrity creates a potential pathway for allergen cross-contact, not just gluten but also from other allergens in your freezer (dairy, nuts, shellfish).

The soup's ingredient list includes no major allergens beyond the inherent chicken and ham (which may be concerns for people with specific meat protein sensitivities). However, cross-contamination during storage can introduce allergens. Maintain packaging integrity through careful handling and appropriate storage location.

## ## Emergency Storage Situations {#emergency-storage-situations}

### ### Power Outage Management {#power-outage-management}

During power outages, keep the freezer door closed to maintain cold temperatures. A full freezer maintains safe temperatures (below  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) for approximately 48 hours if unopened; a half-full freezer for about 24 hours. Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup stored in a well-packed freezer has better temperature retention than soup in a sparsely filled freezer.

If the outage will exceed 24 hours, consider transferring frozen meals to a cooler packed with dry ice. Dry ice ( $-78^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) maintains frozen temperatures far longer than regular ice. Use 11kg of dry ice per 28 litres of freezer space to maintain frozen conditions for 2–3 days. Handle dry ice with insulated gloves and ensure adequate ventilation.

After power restoration, assess each soup container individually. If ice crystals are still visible and the soup feels frozen solid, it's safe to continue storage. If the soup completely thawed but stayed at refrigerator temperatures (below  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), cook and eat within 24 hours. If the soup thawed and exceeded  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$  for more than 2 hours, discard it to prevent foodborne illness.

### ### Freezer Malfunction {#freezer-malfunction}

If your freezer malfunctions and temperatures rise above  $-12^{\circ}\text{C}$  for extended periods, evaluate whether Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup can be salvaged. Check the soup's temperature with a probe thermometer; if it reads above  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$ , the soup entered the danger zone and should be discarded if more than 2 hours elapsed.

For soup that partially thawed but stays below  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$ , you have three options: cook and eat immediately, cook and refrigerate for consumption within 2 days, or refreeze with the understanding that texture quality will decline significantly. Food safety guidelines permit refreezing of foods that stayed at safe refrigeration temperatures, though quality suffers.

Document the malfunction date and assess all frozen inventory systematically. Soups containing vegetables and proteins like this product are more perishable than simple broths or stocks and should be prioritised for evaluation and consumption.

## ## Why Be Fit Food's Frozen Meal System Supports Your Health Goals {#why-be-fit-foods-frozen-meal-system-supports-your-health-goals}

Be Fit Food's snap-frozen delivery system is more than convenience—it's a support system built to help you achieve sustainable weight management and metabolic health. Each Country Chicken, Pea & Ham Soup is portion-controlled to deliver consistent macronutrients: high protein to preserve lean muscle mass, controlled carbohydrates to support stable blood glucose, and dietary fibre from real vegetables to help you feel fuller for longer and support gut health.

The frozen format eliminates decision fatigue and reduces the risk of portion creep that commonly undermines weight-loss efforts. Because each meal is dietitian-designed and nutritionally balanced, proper storage ensures you receive the intended nutritional benefit with every serve. This structure is particularly valuable for people managing metabolic conditions, using weight-loss medications, or navigating hormonal transitions like menopause where consistent, high-quality nutrition supports better outcomes.

Be Fit Food meals contain no added artificial preservatives, no added sugars, and no artificial sweeteners—a clean-label approach that relies on snap-freezing to maintain freshness and quality. Understanding proper storage and handling maximises both the safety and the nutritional integrity of these whole-food meals, ensuring they deliver the metabolic support and eating quality they were designed to provide.

## ## References {#references}

- [Food Standards Australia New Zealand - Freezing and Food Safety](<https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/>) - [FSANZ - Safe Food Australia](<https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety>) - [Be Fit Food Official Website - Product Information](<https://befitfood.com.au/>) - [International Journal of Food Science - Frozen Food Quality and Nutrition](<https://www.hindawi.com/journals/ijfs/>)

---

## ## Frequently Asked Questions {#frequently-asked-questions}

What is the serving size: 276g single-serve portion

Is it gluten-free: Yes, certified gluten-free

What percentage is chicken: 20% chicken content

What percentage is green split peas: 8% green split peas

What percentage is ham: 5% ham content

How many vegetables does it contain: Seven different vegetables

Does it contain carrot: Yes

Does it contain onion: Yes

Does it contain celery: Yes

Does it contain courgette: Yes

Does it contain parsnip: Yes

Does it contain leek: Yes

Does it contain cannellini beans: Yes

Does it contain artificial colours: No artificial colours

Does it contain artificial flavours: No artificial flavours

Is it a good source of fibre: Yes, good source of dietary fibre

Is it a good source of protein: Yes, good source of protein

What is the sodium content per serve: Less than 500mg per serve

Is it low in saturated fat: Yes, low saturated fat content

What is the required freezer temperature: -18°C or below

What is the optimal storage duration: 3–6 months from manufacture date

How long does chicken maintain quality frozen: 4–6 months

How long do split peas maintain quality frozen: 6–9 months

How long does ham maintain peak quality frozen: 2–3 months

What happens after six months storage: Gradual texture, colour, and flavour degradation

Is it safe to eat after best-before date: Yes, if properly frozen

What does the best-before date indicate: Quality degradation, not safety risk

What freezer temperature arrests bacterial growth: -18°C completely arrests bacterial growth

Where should it be stored in freezer: Toward the back, away from door

Should it be stored flat or upright: Flat storage is preferred

How far from freezer walls should it be: 2–3cm gap recommended

What causes freezer burn: Dehydration and oxidation from freezing air exposure

What does freezer burn look like: Greyish-white dry patches

Is freezer burn dangerous: No, but degrades texture and flavour

How long to thaw in refrigerator: 8–12 hours for complete thawing

What temperature for refrigerator thawing: 2–4°C

How long is it safe after refrigerator thawing: 1–2 days before reheating

Can it be reheated from frozen: Yes, direct-from-frozen reheating is possible

What microwave power for frozen reheating: Medium power, 50–60%

How long to microwave from frozen: 8–10 minutes, stirring every 2–3 minutes

How long to stovetop reheat from frozen: 15–20 minutes over low heat

What is the minimum safe reheating temperature: 75°C throughout

Can it be thawed at room temperature: No, unsafe method

Can it be thawed in hot water: No, creates dangerous temperature gradients

Can it be refrozen after thawing: Not recommended, degrades texture significantly

Can it be refrozen after reheating: Never, creates food safety risks

How long can reheated leftovers be refrigerated: Consume within 24 hours

What indicates temperature abuse during storage: Excessive ice crystal formation inside package

What should properly thawed soup smell like: Savoury, herb-forward with chicken stock notes

What indicates bacterial spoilage: Sour, ammonia-like, or putrid odours

What indicates oxidative rancidity: Metallic or cardboard-like odour

What vegetable texture indicates proper storage: Slight softness with some structural integrity

What chicken texture is expected: Tender, easily pulled apart, not stringy

How much vitamin C remains after 3 months: 75–85% of original content

How much vitamin C remains after 6 months: 50–70% of original content

Do B vitamins degrade in frozen storage: Minimal, retaining 85–95% after 6 months

Do fat-soluble vitamins degrade frozen: Minimal losses even after 12 months

Does protein content change when frozen: No, remains essentially unchanged

Does fibre content change when frozen: No, completely stable in frozen storage

Does sodium content change when frozen: No, remains constant throughout storage

Is it suitable for coeliac disease: Yes, certified gluten-free

How long does full freezer maintain temperature during outage: Approximately 48 hours if unopened

How long does half-full freezer maintain temperature during outage: Approximately 24 hours if unopened

How much dry ice needed for emergency storage: 11kg per 28 litres of freezer space

Can partially thawed soup be refrozen: Yes, if remained below 4°C, but quality declines

What temperature indicates danger zone entry: Above 4°C for more than 2 hours

Does it contain added preservatives: No added artificial preservatives

Does it contain added sugars: No added sugars

Does it contain artificial sweeteners: No artificial sweeteners

Is it dietitian-designed: Yes, nutritionally balanced by dietitians

Is it portion-controlled: Yes, consistent macronutrient delivery per serve

What herbs does it contain: Thyme and oregano

Can fresh herbs be added during reheating: Yes, brightens flavours in final minute

What power outage duration is safe: Up to 4 hours if freezer remained closed

Should freezer door be opened during outage: No, keep closed to maintain temperature

How quickly should it be consumed after reheating: Immediately for best quality and safety

What is the maximum ice buildup before defrosting: 5mm thickness in manual-defrost freezers

Where should raw meats be stored relative to soup: Below, on lower shelves

Should aromatic foods be stored near soup: No, separate to prevent odour transfer