

Food Storage Guide

Stocking and Storing Food Safely



Sources:

USDA Food and Inspection Service—www.fsis.usda.gov

Keeping Kids Safe—a Guide for Safe Food Handling for Child Care Providers, USDA Food and Inspection Service

Food Safety.Gov

The Food and Drug Administration Outreach and Information Center—www.fda.gov

Safe Food for Children Washington State University Cooperative Extension Program

Food Storage Guide North Dakota State University www.ag.ndsu.edu

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To Your Health!

Are you storing food safely?

Whether putting food in the refrigerator, the freezer, or the cupboard, you have plenty of opportunities to prevent foodborne illnesses.

Safe handling of food begins with shopping:

- Take advantage of stores that provide sanitizing wipes at the entrance to clean shopping cart handles that can harbor lots of germs.
- Buy refrigerated and frozen foods last.
- Separate any ready-to-eat foods from uncooked foods. Packaged refrigerated or frozen chicken nuggets, for example, must be separated from any uncooked meats.
- Never choose meat or poultry in packaging that is torn or leaking.
- Place meats in plastic bags away from other foods in cart.
- Do not buy food past “Sell-By”, “Use-By” or other expiration dates.
- Buy fresh looking packages. Dusty cans or torn labels can indicate an old product.
- Don’t buy canned goods with bulges, rust, or sharp dents.
- Buy frozen food products that are solidly frozen. Check for soft spots that may indicate thawing.
- Separate all cleaning supplies from food.



Make your trip to the grocery store the last stop before going home. Perishable foods need to be refrigerated within 2 hours (1 hour if temperature above 90°F.) as harmful bacteria grow rapidly temperatures between 40—140 °F.

Any frozen foods may need a cooler with ice to make it home safely.

Foods that are perishable are also known as “potentially hazardous” foods. Potentially hazardous foods are any foods capable of supporting rapid growth of bacteria. These foods are usually moist and low in acid. Do not leave these foods in the “danger zone” (40° to 140° F.) longer than 1—2 hours.

For example: a cooked egg that may have 200 bacteria cells, a level that may not cause illness in all people, is allowed to sit at room temperature (70 °F.). That egg may grow over 25,000 bacteria cells in 2 hours. After 3 hours, the number of bacteria cells could be over 1 million and that could sicken anyone.

Potentially hazardous foods include:

- Foods of animal origin such as meat, milk, cheese, poultry, eggs, fish, and seafood, both raw and cooked.
- Deli foods and ready-to-eat foods.
- Foods of plant origin that have been heat treated, including cooked vegetables, beans and rice.
- Raw sprouts.
- Cut melons, peeled carrots, and other peeled vegetables and fruits.
- Cooked pasta.
- Tofu and other moist soy protein products.
- Sauces such as Hollandaise and many other sauces (unless high in acid, such as vinegars).

Neither refrigerator nor freezer temperatures kill bacteria, they just slow or stop the rate of bacterial growth.

Bacteria remain alive in your freezer!

In the refrigerator (40° F or below), bacteria not only survive, but may grow slowly. Some organisms, like *Listeria*, can grow slowly at refrigerator temperatures. To prevent the multiplying of bacteria on potentially hazardous foods, keep foods cold at all steps in handling.



Cold Storage

The following recommendations will keep refrigerated foods from spoiling or becoming dangerous to eat. The time limits will keep foods frozen at 0°F or below at top quality. Even using these guidelines, remember the most basic rule: **When in doubt, throw it out.**

Refrigerator temperatures may not be warmer than 41 ° F. It is best to keep your refrigerator at 40 ° F or colder. Keep your refrigerator thermometer in the middle of your refrigerator and available to check often.

The coldest part of your refrigerator is usually toward the back and is the best area for storing meats, fish, and poultry. Always keep these foods wrapped and on a tray so that juices do not drip onto other foods.

Most fruits and vegetables should be stored in the refrigerator and used within a few days. All refrigerated or frozen fruits and vegetables are highly perishable due to the high moisture content. Keep chilled fruits and vegetable as dry as possible and make sure air circulation is adequate in the refrigerator.

Product	Refrigerator (40 ° F)	Freezer (0 ° F)
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Eggs

Fresh, in shell (keep in carton)	4 to 5 weeks	Do not freeze
Raw, yolks, whites	2 to 4 days	1 year
Hard cooked	1 week	Don't freeze well
Liquid pasteurized eggs or egg substitute		
Opened	3 days	Do not freeze
Unopened	10 days	1 year

Deli & Vacuum-Packed Products

Store or homemade egg, chicken, tuna, ham, or pasta salads	3 to 5 days	Don't freeze well
Pre-stuffed pork & lamb chops, stuffed chicken breasts	1 day	Don't freeze well
Store cooked convenience foods	1 to 2 days	Don't freeze well
Commercial vacuum packed dinners with USDA seal	2 weeks, unopened	Don't freeze well

Product	Refrigerator (40 ° F)	Freezer (0 ° F)
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Hotdogs and lunch meats

Hotdogs—Opened package	1 week	In freezer wrap—1 to 2 months
Unopened package	2 weeks	
Lunch meats, Opened package	3 to 5 days	In freezer wrap—1 to 2 months
Unopened package	2 weeks	

Soups & Stews

Vegetable or Meat-added	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
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Hamburger, Ground and Stew Meats

Hamburger and Stew meats	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Ground turkey, veal, pork, lamb, and mixtures of them	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months

Ham, Corned Beef

Corned beef in pouch with pickling juices	5 to 7 days	1 month
Ham, canned—label says “keep refrigerated” - Opened	3 to 5 days	Do not freeze
Unopened	6 to 9 months	
Ham, fully cooked—whole	7 days	1 to 2 months
Ham, fully cooked—half	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
Ham, fully cooked—slices	3 to 4 days	1 to 2 months

Sausages

Sausage, raw from pork, beef, turkey	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
Smoked breakfast links, patties	7 days	1 to 2 months
Hard sausage—pepperoni	2 to 3 weeks	1 to 2 months
Bacon	7 days	1 month

Frozen Casseroles, Dinners

Keep frozen until ready to heat		3 to 4 months
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Product	Refrigerator (40 ° F)	Freezer (0 ° F)
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Meats, fresh (beef, lamb, veal, & pork)

Steaks	3 to 5 days	6 to 12 months
Chops	3 to 5 days	4 to 6 months
Roasts	3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months
Variety meats such as liver	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months

Meats, leftovers

Cooked meat and meat dishes	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Gravy and meat broth	1 to 2 days	2 to 3 months

Poultry, fresh

Chicken or turkey, whole	1 to 2 days	1 year
Chicken or turkey, parts	1 to 2 days	9 months
Giblets	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months

Cooked poultry, leftovers

Fried chicken	3 to 4 days	4 months
Cooked poultry dishes	3 to 4 days	4 to 6 months
Cooked poultry pieces	3 to 4 days	4 months
Cooked poultry pieces in broth or gravy	1 to 2 days	6 months
Chicken nuggets, patties	1 to 2 days	1 to 3 months

Fish and Shellfish

Lean fish (cod, haddock)	1 to 2 days	6 months
Fatty fish (salmon, tuna)	1 to 2 days	2 to 3 months
Cooked fish	3 to 4 days	4 to 6 months
Smoked fish	14 days	2 months
Fresh shrimp, scallops, lobster	1 to 2 days	3 to 6 months
Canned seafood (after opening)	3 to 4 days	2 months (out of can)

Product	Refrigerator (40 ° F)	Freezer (0 ° F)
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Dairy

Milk, fluid—whole or low-fat	1 week	Does not freeze well
Butter	3 months	1 year (in original carton)
Cheese, cottage or ricotta	5 to 7 days	Does not freeze well
Natural cheese- cheddar, swiss, gouda, mozzarella	2 to 3 months	6 months (defrost in refrigerator and use soon after thawing)
Processed cheese—American	3 to 4 weeks	6 to 8 months
Yogurt	1 month	Does not freeze well

Breads

Baked quick breads	Not needed if used within 4 to 5 days	2 months
Baked muffins	Not needed if used within 4 to 5 days	6 months to 1 year
Baked breads, no preservatives	2 to 3 weeks	2 to 3 months
Baked fruit pies	2 to 3 days	6 to 8 months
Baked cookies	Not needed if used within 4 to 5 days	6 months to 1 year

Fruits

Apples	1 to 3 weeks	8 months to 1 year (in moisture proof material)
Berries	1 to 2 days	8 months to 1 year (in moisture proof material)
Canned fruits—opened	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
Citrus fruits	3 weeks	4 to 6 months (in moisture proof material)
Juices, canned and bottled	1 week	1 year (transfer canned juice to glass or plastic container before freezing)
Melons	1 week	8 months to 1 year
Note: Always wrap cut fruit to prevent loss of vitamin C		Texture of fruits will be softer after freezing

Product	Refrigerator (40 ° F)	Freezer (0 ° F)
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Vegetables

Beans, green or waxed	1 week	8 months to 1 year (in moisture proof material)
Beets, carrots, broccoli	3 to 5 days	8 months to 1 year (in moisture proof material)
Cabbage, celery	1 to 2 weeks	Does not freeze well
Corn, fresh	1 day	8 months to 1 year (in moisture proof material)
Cucumbers	1 week	Does not freeze well
Lettuce, other salad greens	1 week	Does not freeze well
Mushrooms	1 to 2 days	8 months to 1 year (in moisture proof material)
Peas, lima beans	2 to 5 days	8 months to 1 year (in moisture proof material)
Peppers	1 week	8 months to 1 year (in moisture proof material)

Additional fruit and vegetable storage tips:

- ✓ All cut, peeled, or cooked vegetables or fruits must be stored in clean covered containers in the refrigerator. Dating containers helps you keep track of storage times.
- ✓ Do not store fruits and vegetables together. Fruits speed up the ripening process in vegetables. Fruits are very susceptible to picking up the flavors of nearby vegetables.
- ✓ Root vegetables such as potatoes and onions, and winter squashes and pumpkin store best in a cool, dry location before they are cooked. The refrigerator is too moist for these fresh vegetables.
- ✓ Once cut, squash may be refrigerated for 2 to 5 days. Freezing is not recommended.
- ✓ All fruits and vegetables should be as dry as possible before storage. Moisture promotes the growth of mold and speeds the decaying process.
- ✓ Store lettuce and other greens in moisture resistant wrap, bag, or lettuce keeper. Wrap and store away from other fruit and vegetables as much as possible.
- ✓ Although tomatoes may be refrigerated, refrigeration makes them tasteless and changes the texture. Store cut tomatoes in the refrigerator and use within 1 day.

Dry Storage

Canned, jarred, and packaged food that is non-perishable needs a clean, dry location for storage:

- Store at room temperature, between 50—70°F.
- On shelving that is easily cleaned and is at least **6 inches off the floor**.
- In a tightly covered container or zip-lock bag if food is removed from the original packaging.
- Label the container or bag with name of food and date opened.
- Practice “first in—first out” rotation.
- Watch expiration dates.
- Never store food under any plumbing lines, especially under kitchen sinks.
- Never store food on the floor.

Product	Storage	Handling Hints
Crackers	3 months	Keep tightly closed
Cookies		
Homemade	2 to 3 weeks	Store in airtight container
Packaged	2 months	Keep tightly closed
Pancake mixes	6 to 9 months	Keep in airtight container
Rice mixes	6 months	Keep cool and dry
Canned juices/juice boxes	9 months	Keep cool
Canned foods—unopened	1 year	Keep cool
Dried fruits	6 months	Keep cool in airtight container
Soup mixes	6 months	Keep cool and dry
Catsup—unopened	1 year	Refrigerate for longer storage after opening
opened	1 month	

A Guide to Expiration Dates:

There is no standardized system for food dating in the United States. States may require dating, and approximately 20 states, including Massachusetts, require dating on perishable foods.

What Do Packaging Dates Mean?

- ◆ “Sell by” means the store should sell the product by the printed date, but the consumer still can eat the product safely after that date.
- ◆ “Best if used by” means the consumer should use the product by the date listed for best quality and flavor (not for safety reasons).
- ◆ “Use by” is the last date recommended for use at peak quality. You will likely see a marked deterioration in the product quality (flavor, appearance, texture) after that date.
- ◆ **NOTE—Do not use infant formula or baby food after the “use by” date.**
- ◆ “Closed or coded dates” are packaging numbers used by food manufacturers. If a problem occurs with the food, it can be recalled.

Baby Food Storage

For shelf storage of unopened cans of infant formula and unopened infant food jars, observe the “use-by” dates printed on the containers. Follow all dry storage guidelines. Check jars to see if the safety button is down. Do not use jarred baby food if the jar does not “pop” when opened.

For cold storage:

Product	Refrigerator (40 ° F)	Freezer (0 ° F)
Expressed breast milk—stored in airtight hard plastic bottle	48 hours—store in back of refrigerator. <i>Always mark with date of collection.</i>	3 months from date of collection. <i>Always mark with date of collection.</i>
Infant formula—opened cans	48 hours	Do not freeze infant formula
Infant fruits/vegetables opened or freshly made	2 to 3 days	6 to 8 months
Infant meats opened or freshly made	1 day	1 to 2 months
Infant—homemade foods	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months

Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency

In Massachusetts we are now well aware that power outages due to storms are very possible. When this happens, the best strategy is to already have a plan in place. This includes knowing food and water safety precautions to take. Always remember, when in doubt, throw it out!

Be Prepared for Emergencies

1. Make sure you have thermometers in refrigerators and freezers.
2. Check to ensure refrigerators are at or below 40°F and freezers at or below 0°F.
3. Freeze containers of water for ice to help keep food cold or to use as drinking water, if needed.
4. Freeze refrigerated items that you may not need immediately.
5. Group foods together in the freezer. This helps food stay cold longer.
6. Have coolers on hand to use for refrigerated foods if the power is out for more than 4 hours.
7. Purchase or make ice ahead if you have advance warning of dangerous storms.
8. Store food on shelves that will be safely out to the way of contaminated water in case of flooding.
9. Make sure to have a supply of bottled water stored where it will be as safe as possible from flooding.

Power Outages: During and After

When the power goes out...

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
- The refrigerator will keep food **cold for about 4 hours if not opened.**
- A **full freezer** will keep the temperature about **48 hours** (24 hours if half full) if the door remains closed.
- If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish, or eggs while still at safe temperature, **cook thoroughly to proper temperature using a food thermometer.**
- If at any point the food was above 40°F. for more than 2 hours, discard it.
- **Wash fruits and vegetables** with water from a safe source before eating.
- For infants, use prepared canned infant formula that requires no water, if possible.
- When using concentrated or powdered infant formulas, prepare with bottled water if the local water source is potentially contaminated.

Once power is restored...

- **Check the temperature** of the freezer when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40°F. or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, **check each package** of food to determine safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food **still contains ice crystals** or is at 40°F. or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out **no more than 4 hours** and the refrigerator door remained closed.
- Discard any perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or leftovers that have been above 40°F. for two hours or more.
- Keep in mind that perishable foods that are **not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause illness** if consumed, even when thoroughly cooked.



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February 2013***

***Required Training
FY 2013***

TO:



Food Storage Guide

Stocking and Storing Food Safely

**This is a required training for 2 hours of
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Training credit.**

**Successful completion meets your Food Safety/Sanitation
training requirement for fiscal year 2013.**

**Complete all the home study questions
and submit to the YFCI office
within two (2) weeks of receipt of this home study.**