

SAFE FOOD HANDLING



Recommendations for Storage, Handling & Cooking



In the home, food safety generally focuses on these areas: storage, handling and cooking. The following tips will help you keep your food safe.

Shopping

- The grocery store should be your last stop. Take cold food straight home to the refrigerator. If you must travel more than 30 minutes from the store to home, carry a cooler equipped with cold packs to ensure that your cold and frozen foods make the trip safely. **Never leave food in a hot car!**
- Check the “use-by” date before buying. If you can’t use the product by that date, leave it at the store.
- Don’t buy food in poor condition. Refrigerated foods should be cold to the touch. NOTE: Refrigerated frozen food display cases should have thermometers for easy observation. Frozen food should be solid (like a rock) to the touch. Canned foods should be free of dents, cracks or bulging lids. All of these could be an indication of potential food poisoning.

Storing Food

- Home refrigerator temperature should be at 40° Fahrenheit or below. The freezer unit or home freezer should operate at 0° Fahrenheit or below. We suggest keeping a thermometer in both the refrigerator and freezer.
- Fresh meats, poultry and fish that will not be used within 1 to 2 days of purchase should be frozen. It is recommended that they be double-wrapped for proper freezer storage. Plastic freezer and/or paper bags are suitable for this purpose.
- Foods purchased in large quantities (by the case) should be labeled with the date of purchase. This will allow you to know exactly how long the food has been in the cabinet. Remember the **FIFO (first in-first out)** rule!
- Items such as flour and cornmeal may be best stored in the refrigerator. Cold storage prevents insect infestation.
- Eggs should be stored in their original carton in the refrigerator. Removing eggs from their original carton to refrigerator storage compartments increases the chance of the accidental cracking of shells, which could lead to contamination from bacteria on your hands. Storage in the original carton will also help prevent the absorption of strong odors through the egg shells.

Preparing Food

- Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent germs from spreading. Remember — 1. Use soap and warm water, 2. Rub hands together for 10 to 15 seconds and 3. Rinse and dry. Always wash your hands before preparing food, after using the bathroom, changing diapers, sneezing or handling pets.
- Kitchen towels, sponges and cloths harbor harmful bacteria. Wash towels, etc.,

in hot, soapy water in your washer. If you choose to use a sponge in the kitchen, place in the dishwasher daily to kill bacteria. Paper towels are recommended to clean up meat and poultry juice spills.

- Keep raw meat, poultry, fish and their juices away from other foods to avoid possible cross-contamination. Wash your hands, counter tops, cutting boards and all utensils in hot soapy water after cutting up chicken and before slicing ingredients for salads. **Always** wash faucet handles and sinks with hot, soapy water after working with raw meat.

- Plastic or nonporous cutting boards that can be placed in dishwashers are recommended. If you don't use a dishwasher, consider using a sanitizing solution of 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach to 1 gallon of water. NOTE: Perfumed bleaches should **not** be used. Check the label on all bleach products for specific product-use instructions.

- **Never** thaw foods on the kitchen counter. Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or microwave.

- Marinate foods in the refrigerator. Discard marinades after use. Never save marinades for use at a later date. Marinades which have been used for raw products should not be placed on foods during or after cooking. Remove a small amount of marinade for that purpose before adding the raw product or make two batches.

Cooking Food

- Thorough cooking kills harmful bacteria. You are taking chances when eating foods that are raw or
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Cooking Temperatures	
Product	Degrees Fahrenheit
Eggs and Egg Dishes	
Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm
Egg dishes	160
Ground Meat and Meat Mixtures	
Turkey, chicken	165
Veal, beef, lamb, pork	160
Fresh Beef	
Medium rare	145
Medium	160
Well done	170
Fresh Veal	
Medium rare	145
Medium	160
Well done	170
Fresh Lamb	
Medium rare	145
Medium	160
Well done	170
Fresh Pork	
Medium	160
Well done	170
Poultry	
Chicken, whole	180
Turkey, whole	180
Poultry breasts, roasts	170
Poultry thighs, wings	Cook until juices run clear
Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	165
Duck and goose	180
Ham	
Fresh (raw)	160
Precooked (to reheat)	140

COLD STORAGE

Product	Refrigerator (40° F)	Freezer (0° F)
Eggs		
Fresh, in shell	3 weeks	Don't freeze
Raw yolks, whites	2-4 days	1 year
Hardcooked	1 week	Don't freeze well
Liquid pasteurized eggs or egg substitutes, opened	3 days	Don't freeze
unopened	10 days	1 year
Mayonnaise, commercial		
Refrigerate after opening	2 months	Don't freeze
TV Dinners, Frozen Casseroles		
Keep frozen until ready to serve		3-4 months
Deli & Vacuum-Packed Products		
Store-prepared (or homemade) egg, chicken, tuna, ham, macaroni salads	3-5 days	} These products don't freeze well
Pre-stuffed pork & lamb chops, chicken breasts stuffed with dressing	1 day	
Store-cooked convenience meals	1-2 days	
Commercial brand vacuum-packed dinners with USDA seal	2 weeks, unopened	
Soups & Stews		
Vegetable or meat-added	3-4 days	2-3 months
Hamburger, Ground & Stew Meats		
Hamburger & stew meats	1-2 days	3-4 months
Ground turkey, veal, pork, lamb & mixtures of them	1-2 days	3-4 months
Hotdogs & Lunch Meats		
Hotdogs, opened package	1 week	In freezer wrap, 1-2 months
unopened package	2 weeks	
Lunch meats, opened	3-5 days	
unopened	2 weeks	

NOTE: These SHORT but safe time limits will help keep refrigerated food from spoiling or becoming dangerous to eat. These time limits will keep frozen food at top quality.

Bacon & Sausage

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

Ham, Corned Beef

Corned beef in pouch with pickling juices	5-7 days	Drained, wrapped 1 month
Ham, canned Label says keep refrigerated	6-9 months	Don't freeze
Ham, fully cooked—whole	7 days	1-2 months
Ham, fully cooked—half	3-5 days	1-2 months
Ham, fully cooked—slices	3-4 days	1-2 months

Fresh Meat

Steaks, beef	3-5 days	6-12 months
Chops, pork	3-5 days	4-6 months
Chops, lamb	3-5 days	6-9 months
Roasts, beef	3-5 days	6-12 months
Roasts, lamb	3-5 days	6-9 months
Roasts, pork & veal	3-5 days	4-6 months
Variety meats—Tongue, brain, kidneys, liver, heart, chitterlings	1-2 days	3-4 months

Meat Leftovers

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

Fresh Poultry

Chicken or turkey, whole	1-2 days	1 year
Chicken or turkey pieces	1-2 days	9 months
Giblets	1-2 days	3-4 months

Cooked Poultry, Leftover

Fried chicken	3-4 days	4 months
Cooked poultry dishes	3-4 days	4-6 months
Pieces, plain	3-4 days	4 months
Pieces covered with broth, gravy	1-2 days	6 months
Chicken nuggets, patties	1-2 days	1-3 months

partly cooked. From a food safety point of view, hamburgers, steaks and roast beef should be thoroughly cooked, not red in the middle.

- Red meat should be cooked to 160° Fahrenheit and poultry to 180° Fahrenheit. To insure proper cooking temperature throughout the product, use a meat thermometer. It is especially important to be sure that ground meat is cooked thoroughly. This means that no pink is left in the middle or in the juices. Large cuts, such as roasts, may be slightly pink in the middle as long as they have reached a temperature of 140° Fahrenheit (medium to rare). Do not serve your roast at this temperature if you have cut or poked it with a fork or tenderized it before cooking. This will force surface bacteria into the center.

- Cook eggs until yolk and white are firm, not runny. Do not use recipes that require raw or partially cooked eggs. Anyone who is particularly vulnerable to infections caused by bacteria, like Salmonella, should avoid these foods.

Takeout Foods

Some are hot, some are cold, but they all require your attention. Takeout foods are perishable and can cause illness when they are mishandled.

- Keep hot foods above 140° Fahrenheit.
- Cold foods must be stored in the refrigerator at 40° Fahrenheit or below.
- Pick up and eat hot foods within 2 hours.
- If you can't eat within 2 hours, hold food in the oven at a temperature that will keep the food at 140° Fahrenheit. Remember — use a meat or instant-read thermometer to check the internal temperature.
- Perishable food should not be at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Discard food after 1 hour if temperatures are more than 90° Fahrenheit.
- Keep cold foods served on the buffet table safe by nesting their containers in a bed of ice.
- Use small platters of food and replace the entire platter. Do not add fresh foods to partially used platters.
- If your takeouts are going to a picnic, a well-insulated cooler packed with ice or freezer packs will help to insure that your food is safe when it arrives at the picnic.

Leftovers

- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator. It is also important not to pack the refrigerator. Cool air must be able to circulate to keep foods safe.
- Dinner entrees, such as "stuffed meats," should be refrigerated separately. Remove stuffing and refrigerate in separate containers.

Reheating

- Sauces, soups and gravies should be brought to a rolling boil. Heat other leftovers thoroughly to 165° Fahrenheit.
- Microwaves are used many times for reheating foods. Be sure to use a lid or

vented plastic wrap for thorough heating. Allow a standing time of 2 minutes for a more thorough heating.

When in Doubt, Throw it Out!

- Never taste food that looks or smells strange to see if it can be used. Throw it away!
- Moldy foods should be immediately discarded. The poisons that molds can form are found under the surface of food.

Is it Food Poisoning?

Foodborne illness is preventable. Most foodborne illness is caused by mishandling of food.

- Should you or a family member develop nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever or cramps, it could be food poisoning. It is not always easy to tell, since symptoms can appear from 30 minutes to 2 weeks after eating bad food. However, most people will get sick within 4 to 48 hours after eating.
- More serious cases of food poisoning can result in nervous system problems, like paralysis, double vision or trouble swallowing or breathing.

In the case of serious illness or if the person is very young, old, pregnant or already ill, call a doctor or go to the hospital right away.

Reporting Foodborne Illness

- All serious cases of foodborne illness should be reported to your local health department.
- All food poisoning illness that resulted from food at a restaurant or commercial outlet should be reported immediately. Be prepared to give an accurate account of the incident and have food on hand to describe.
- If asked to keep the food in your refrigerator so officials may examine later, follow their directions carefully.

What to do if the Power is Out

- Without power, a full, upright or chest freezer will keep foods frozen for 2 days. Freezers that are half full will keep food frozen for one day.
- If the power will be coming back on fairly soon, you can make the food last longer by keeping the freezer door shut as much as possible.
- If the power will be off for an extended period, take foods to another freezer, locate a commercial freezer or use dry ice.
- In a refrigerator-freezer combination, the refrigerator section will keep food cool 4 to 6 hours depending on the kitchen temperature. In the freezer section, foods should stay frozen for 2 days. A half-full section should keep foods frozen for 1 day.
- Thawed foods containing ice crystals or that feel refrigerator cold can be refrozen.
- Discard any thawed food that has risen to room temperature and remained there for 2 hours or more. Immediately discard foods with a strange color or odor.



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