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# How to Store Food Safely at Home: A Guide to Refrigerated, Frozen, and Dry Goods

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## What you will learn

- **Most date labels show quality, not safety**, except for infant formula.
- **Keep foods at safe temperatures**—below 40°F (fridge), 0°F (freezer), and dry foods cool and dry.
- **Store foods to prevent cross-contamination**, with raw meats on lower shelves.
- **After a power outage, discard perishables after 4 hours (fridge) or 1–2 days (freezer).**
- **Use FIFO and label leftovers**, which last 3–4 days in the fridge.

Figure 1. A paper shopping bag filled with groceries

Consumers get food in many ways. They can purchase their food from a convenience store, grocery store, or supermarket, grow or raise their own food, or receive food through a food pantry or other hunger relief program when needed. Often, an individual consumer will have access to more food than they can eat in a day, so it will need to be stored until it is used. This publication will address how you can safely store your food for optimal quality until you are ready to use and consume it.

## Understanding Food Date Labels: "Sell By," "Best By," and More

The dates printed on food labels almost always refer to the quality, and not the safety, of the food. It notes when the manufacturer will no longer guarantee the quality of the food. Ideally, you will be able to get food before the food manufacturer's freshness dates. However, if a food has been properly stored and the printed date has passed, the food should still be safe to consume.

The exception to this is infant formula. Infant formula should not be consumed past the manufacturer's printed date. Infants need a specific balance of nutrients to grow properly, and past the printed date, the manufacturer can no longer guarantee all those nutrients are present within the formula.

Meat, fish, poultry, dairy, and fresh bakery products are dated with a "sell by" or "display until" date to indicate how long the food can be displayed for sale. The "sell by" date provides a reasonable amount of time after purchase for the product to be used. Oftentimes, grocery stores and supermarkets will discount foods as they get closer to the "sell by" date.

Cereals, snack foods, frozen entrees, and dry packaged foods may be marked with a “best if used by,” best by,” “best before,” or “use by” date. The products are not at their best quality after this date but can still be safely consumed.

Another label that can be found on some meat, poultry, fish, or other perishable products is a “freeze by,” “prepare or freeze by,” or “use or freeze by” date. This date is to inform the consumer when to prepare the food, or if they won’t prepare it by then, when to freeze it until they do.

## Safe Grocery Shopping Tips for Perishable Foods

When food shopping, pick up refrigerated and frozen foods just before checkout. Refrigerated foods should be cold (<40°F), and frozen foods should be solid with no evidence of thawing (<0°F). Refrigerated and frozen food should be bagged together. After shopping, drive straight home and store food in the refrigerator or freezer. If you live further from the store, consider using insulated grocery bags or a cooler.

## How to Store Food Properly to Maximize Shelf Life

The shelf-life of food will depend upon the food itself, its packaging, the temperature, and the humidity. Foods, such as dairy products, meats, poultry, eggs, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, will spoil rapidly if not stored at proper temperatures.

For optimal quality and safety, dairy products should be stored at refrigerated temperatures between 34°F and 38°F, meats between 33°F and 36°F, and eggs between 33°F and 37°F. Fresh vegetables and ripe fruits should be stored between 35°F and 40°F. Always store refrigerated foods at temperatures less than 40°F. So, for optimal quality and safety, consider keeping your refrigerator at 35°F. Place a thermometer in the refrigerator and monitor the temperature often.

There is a particular order you should store foods in the refrigerator to decrease the risk of cross-contamination. This is where any bacteria or other foodborne hazards that can make people sick are transferred from one food to another. It depends on whether you will cook the food and, if so, the final recommended cooking temperature.

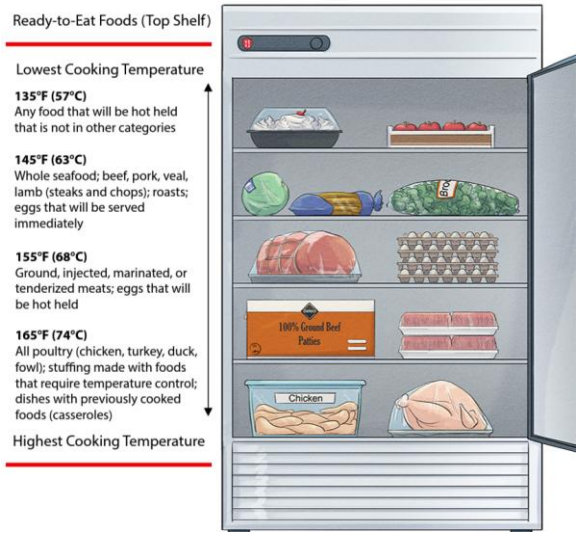


Figure 2. A chart showing the recommended order of storing foods in the refrigerator to decrease the risk of cross-contamination. Source: State Food Safety

Frozen foods should be stored below 0°F in moisture-proof, gas-impermeable plastic or freezer wrap. Make sure to label and date frozen foods so you know what it is when you take them out.

Be mindful not to overload your refrigerator or freezer. If you do, you can block the airflow necessary to keep the entire unit at the proper temperature.

Dry foods such as flour, crackers, cake mixes, seasonings, and canned goods should be stored in their original packages or tightly closed airtight containers below 85°F (optimally 50°F to 70°F). Humidity levels greater than 60% may cause dry foods to absorb moisture, resulting in caked and stale products. Canned goods stored in high humidity may ultimately rust, resulting in leaky cans. Discard canned goods that are swollen, badly dented, rusted, and/or leaking.

Food that is not stored at the recommended temperature will spoil. You will know it has spoiled because of any off-odors, off-flavors, off-color, or soft texture. For instance, spoiled milk exhibits a fruity off-odor, an acidic taste, and the potential to curdle. Spoiled fresh fruits and vegetables may

exhibit an off-color and soft texture. Slime on the surface of meat, poultry, and fish indicates spoilage. Mold on the surface of dairy products indicates spoilage.

When you take foods out of the refrigerator or freezer, leave them out for no more than 2 hours (or 1 hour if the ambient temperature is above 90°F). Discard all refrigerated and frozen foods that may have been at room temperature more than 2 hours (or 1 hour if the ambient temperature is above 90°F).

To ensure your food is stored and consumed at the highest quality, practice FIFO (First-In-First-Out). When stocking food storage areas, place recently purchased items behind the existing food items. If you shop or receive food from multiple sources, you may need to check the dates printed on the packages to know where to place your food in order.

We recommend that you portion leftovers of prepared foods in clean, sanitized, shallow containers that you cover, label, and date (for example, by writing on a piece of masking or painters tape). Generally, leftovers should be discarded after 3-4 days in the refrigerator. You could also freeze leftovers to eat them later.

For safety, always store food separately from non-food items such as household cleaners and insecticides. Contamination of food or eating utensils with a household cleaner or insecticide could result in chemical poisoning.

# How to Keep Food Safe During a Power Outage

When the power goes out in the home, do not open your refrigerator or freezer. Refrigerators and freezers are insulated, which helps keep food cold without active cooling. However, if the refrigerator or freezer door is opened, that cooling effect will be lost.

Perishable refrigerated foods (i.e., meat, poultry, seafood, dairy, and cut fruits and vegetables) should be discarded after 4 hours. Food stored in fully loaded freezers may last for approximately two days (48 hours), whereas food stored in partially loaded freezers may last for only one day (24 hours).

Freezer foods may be refrozen if ice crystals are present or if it is at 40°F or lower. However, quality may be diminished. If in doubt about the safety of any food stored in a refrigerator or freezer after the power goes out, do not eat it.

If the power is not going to be restored in enough time, you could consider loading your refrigerator or freezer with ice or dry ice to keep the food appropriately cold. Or you could move foods into an insulated cooler filled with ice or dry ice. If you use dry ice, be careful not to handle it with your bare hands or breathe the vapors.

# Food Storage Guidelines by Category

## Bread, Cereal, Flour, and Rice

**Bread** should be stored in the original package at room temperature. However, bread stored in the refrigerator may be firmer and will have a longer shelf life due to delayed mold growth. Refrigerate **cream-filled bakery goods** containing **eggs, cream cheese, whipped cream, and/or custards**.

**Cereals** may be stored at room temperature in tightly closed containers to keep out moisture and insects. **Whole wheat flour** and other **whole grains** may be stored in the refrigerator or freezer to extend shelf life by protecting the naturally present oil from becoming rancid.

Store **raw white rice** in tightly closed containers at room temperature and use within one year. **Brown and wild rice** stored at room temperature will have a shorter shelf-life because the naturally present oil can become rancid. The shelf-life of rice may be extended by refrigeration or freezing.

## Fresh, Whole Vegetables

Removing air (oxygen) from the package, storing the vegetables at 40°F, and maintaining optimum humidity (95 to 100%) may extend the shelf-life of *fresh vegetables*. Most **fresh vegetables** may be stored up to 5 days in the refrigerator. Proper storage of fresh vegetables will maintain quality and nutritive value. Always store fresh vegetables in a separate storage area in the refrigerator to avoid any odor transfer or bacterial contamination. Prior to consumption, rinse fresh vegetables under cold

running water to remove possible pesticide residues, soil, and/or bacteria.

**Root vegetables (potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions**, etc.) and **squashes, eggplant,** and **rutabagas** should be stored in a cool, well-ventilated place between 50°F and 60°F.

**Tomatoes** continue to ripen after harvesting and should be stored at room temperature.

Removing the tops of **carrots, radishes**, and **beets** before refrigerator storage will reduce loss of moisture and extend shelf life.

The palatability of **corn** diminishes during cold storage due to elevated starch content. **Corn** and **peas** should be stored in a ventilated container.

**Lettuce** should be rinsed under cold running water, drained, packaged in containers or bags, and refrigerated.

## Processed Vegetables

**Canned vegetables** can be stored in a cool, dry area below 85°F (optimum 50°F to 70°F). Canned vegetables will remain safe to consume after the use-by date; however, overall quality and nutritional value may have diminished. Discard badly dented, swollen, and/or rusty cans.

**Frozen vegetables** may be stored in the freezer. Follow package instructions for thawing/cooking. **Dehydrated vegetables** should be stored in a cool, dry place in a sealed container or bag.

Fresh, Whole Fruit

In general, store **fresh fruit** in the refrigerator or in a cold area to extend shelf life. Reduce loss of moisture from fresh fruit by using covered containers. Always store fresh fruit in a separate storage area in the refrigerator to avoid any odor transfer or bacterial contamination. Prior to consumption, rinse fresh fruits under cold running water to remove possible pesticide residues, soil, and/or bacteria.

Ripe **apples** should be stored separately from other foods in the refrigerator and eaten within one month. Apples stored at room temperature will soften rapidly within a few days. Remember to remove apples that are bruised or decayed before storing them in the refrigerator. Do not wash apples before storage.

**Green pears** and **apricots** should be ripened at room temperature and then stored in the refrigerator.

Unripe **peaches** and **nectarines** may be ripened at room temperature, and ripe peaches and nectarines may be stored in the refrigerator. Consume peaches and nectarines at room temperature.

**Grapes** and **plums** can be stored in the refrigerator. Store unwashed grapes separately from other foods in the refrigerator and wash before consumption.

Ripe **strawberries** can be stored in the refrigerator separately from other foods. Strawberries should be washed and stemmed before consumption.

**Citrus fruits**, such as **lemons, limes**, and ripened **oranges**, can be stored in the refrigerator. **Grapefruit** may be stored at a slightly higher temperature of 50°F.

**Melons,** such as the **honeydew melon, cantaloupe**, and **watermelon**, may be ripened at room temperature. Store ripe *melons* in the refrigerator.

**Avocados** and **bananas** should be ripened at room temperature. Storing unripe bananas in the refrigerator will cause the bananas to darken rapidly.

## Processed Fruit

**Canned fruit** and *fruit juices* may be stored in a cool, dry place below 85°F (optimum 50°F to 70°F). As with **canned vegetables, canned fruits** can be safely consumed after the printed use-by date; however, overall quality and nutritional value may have diminished. Discard badly dented, bulging, rusty, or leaky cans. **Dried fruits** have a long shelf-life because moisture has been removed from the product.

## Dairy Products

The shelf-life of **fluid milk** stored in the refrigerator (<40°F) will range from 8 to 20 days, depending upon the date of manufacture and storage conditions in the grocery store. Milk is a very nutritious and highly perishable food. Milk should never be left at room temperature and should always be capped or closed during refrigerator storage. Freezing milk is not recommended, since the thawed milk easily

separates and is susceptible to the development of off flavors.

**Dry milk** may be stored in airtight containers for one year. Opened containers of dry milk, especially **whole milk** products, should be stored at cold temperatures to reduce off flavors. Handle **reconstituted milk** like **fluid milk** and store at refrigeration temperatures if not immediately used.

**Canned evaporated milk** and **sweetened condensed milk** may be stored at room temperature. Refrigerate opened canned milk.

**Natural** and **processed cheese** should be kept tightly packaged in moisture-resistant wrappers and stored below 40°F. Surface mold growth on hard natural cheese may be removed with a clean knife and discarded. Rewrap cheese to prevent moisture loss.

The presence of mold growth in **processed cheese**, **semi-soft cheese**, and **cottage cheese** is an indicator of spoilage. These foods should be discarded.

Store commercial **ice cream** in the freezer. Immediately return opened ice cream to the freezer to prevent loss of moisture and development of ice crystals. Store ice cream at constant freezer temperatures to slow the growth of ice crystals.

## Meats, Poultry, Fish, and Eggs

**Meat, poultry, fish**, and **eggs** are highly perishable and potentially hazardous due to their high moisture and high protein content. Generally, fresh cuts of meat, poultry, and fish contain spoilage bacteria on the surface that will grow, produce slime, and cause spoilage after 3 days of refrigerator storage in oxygen-permeable packaging film. For maximum storage in the freezer, wrap in moisture-proof, gas-impermeable packaging to prevent freezer burn.

**Raw meats** should be stored on the lower shelves of the refrigerator. Refrigerator storage slows bacterial growth; however, the product will eventually spoil. The optimum storage temperature of **refrigerated meats**, including **ground meat**, is 33°F to 36°F.

**Ground meat** products are more susceptible to spoilage due to the manufacturing process and their increased surface area. Bacteria in ground meats are distributed throughout, providing rapid growth in the presence of air.

**Cured meats**, such as **bacon**, should be stored in their original packaging in the refrigerator. **Cured meats** tend to become rancid when exposed to air. Therefore, rewrap cured meats after opening the package.

Vacuum-packaging (absence of air) and modified atmospheric packaging (partial removal of air) extends the shelf-life of **meats** and **meat products** (i.e., **luncheon meats**). Freezing inhibits the growth of bacteria.

**Poultry** can be bought fresh or frozen. **Raw poultry** should be stored on the lower shelf of the refrigerator. Thaw poultry in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave.

Fresh **fish, shrimp**, and **crab** should be stored in the refrigerator (slightly above 32°F). Never store fresh fish in water because it leaches nutrients, flavor, and pigments. Keep frozen fish, shrimp, and crab in the freezer until ready to use. Thaw according to package instructions.

**Eggs** should be purchased refrigerated and stored in the refrigerator (33°F to 37°F) in their original carton. Storage of eggs in the original carton reduces absorption of odors and flavors from other foods stored in the refrigerator. Shell eggs should never be stored in the freezer.

Leftover egg yolks and egg whites may be stored in the refrigerator. Cover egg yolks with water. Hard-boiled eggs, pasteurized liquid eggs, pasteurized liquid egg white, and pasteurized liquid egg substitute should be stored in the refrigerator. Egg whites, pasteurized liquid eggs, pasteurized liquid egg white, and pasteurized liquid egg substitute may also be frozen.

## Water

Commercial bottled water has an extended shelf-life of one to two years due to extensive water treatment (filtration, demineralization, and ozonation) and strict environmental controls during manufacturing and packaging. Bottled water should be stored in a cool, dry place away from sunlight. Household tap water has a limited shelf-life of only a few days due to the growth of microorganisms during storage. Therefore, consumers should purchase bottled water if planning to store water for extended periods.

# References

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# Appendix 1. Food Storage Recommendations

The following tables provide general recommended storage times from the date of purchase for various food products stored under optimum conditions. Storage generally is not recommended under conditions where no time is listed in the chart.

This chart does not include all foods. Please use/download the FoodKeeper App from the United States Department of Agriculture to find foods not included on this chart. The tables in this appendix include information about the following foods:



Table 1. Recommendations for storing bread and cereal products.

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Bread, homemade** | 3-5 days | 2-3 months | |
| **Bread, purchased** | 14-18 days | 2-3 weeks, opened | 3-5 months |
| **Breadcrumbs** | 6 months | | |
| **Bread rolls, unbaked** | | 3-4 days | 1 year |
| **Cereals, ready-to-eat** | 6-12 months | | |
| **Cereals, ready-to-eat** | 2-3 months, opened | | |
| **Cereals, ready-to-cook** | 1 year | | |
| **Cereals, ready-to-cook** | 6-12 months, opened | | |
| **Corn meal (regular, de-germinated)** | 6-12 months | 1 year, opened | |
| **Corn meal (regular, de-germinated)** | 2 years, opened | | |
| **Corn meal (stone ground or blue)** | 1 month | 2-4 months, opened | |
| **Croutons** | 5-6 months | 5-6 months | 11-12 months |
| **Doughnuts** | 1-2 days | 2 days | |
| **Flour, all-purpose, white** | 6-12 months | 1 year | |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Flour, all-purpose, white** | 6-8 months, opened | | |
| **Flour, whole wheat** | 3-6 months | 6-8 months, opened | |
| **Pasta** | 2 years | | |
| **Pasta** | 1 year, opened | | |
| **Pies and pastries** | | Package use-by date | 2 months |
| **Pies and pastries, fruit** | 1-2 days | 1 week, opened | 8 months |
| **Pies and pastries, cream-filled** | | 3-4 days | |
| **Pies and pastries, custard-filled** | 2 hours | 3-4 days, opened | 1-2 months |
| **Pizza, frozen** | | 3-4 days | 1 year |
| **Pizza, leftovers** | | 3-4 days | 1-2 months |
| **Rice, brown** | 1 year | 4-6 days, cooked | 6 months, cooked |
| **Rice, brown** | 1 year, opened | 6 months, opened | |
| **Rice, white** | 2 years | 4-6 days, cooked | 6 months, cooked |
| **Rice, white** | 1 year, opened | 6 months, opened | |
| **Tortillas, corn** | 25-45 days | 60-90 days | |
| **Tortillas, flour** | 3 months | 3 months, opened | 6 months |
| **Waffles, frozen** | | | 3 months |

Table 2. Recommendations for storing dry goods, packaged foods, and mixes.

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Bread, brownie, and cake mixes** | 12-18 months | | |
| **Cakes and muffins, prepared** | 3-7 days | 7-10 days, opened | 6 months |
| **Casseroles, prepared** | 3-4 days | | |
| **Cookies, frozen dough** | | 3-4 days, cooked | 1 year |
| **Cookies, refrigerated dough** | | Package use-by date | 2 months |
| **Cookies, packaged** | 2-6 months | | 8-12 months |
| **Crackers** | 8 months | 3-4 months, opened | 3-4 months |
| **Crackers** | 1 month, opened | | |
| **Frosting, canned** | 10-12 months | 2-3 weeks, opened | |
| **Frosting, mix** | 8 months | | |
| **Fruit cake** | 6 months | 1 year, opened | 1 year |
| **Instant breakfast drinks** | 6 months | | |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Muffin mix** | 9 months | | |
| **Pancake, waffle, and biscuit mix** | 9 months | | |
| **Pretzels** | 4-9 months | | |
| **Pretzels** | 3 weeks, opened | | |
| **Toaster pastries** | 6-12 months | | |
| **Toaster pastries** | 1-2 weeks, opened | | |
| **Sauce and gravy mixes** | 2 years | 1-2 days, cooked | |
| **Soup mixes** | 1 year | | |

Table 3. Recommendations for storing spices, herbs, condiments, and extracts

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Ketchup, chili, or cocktail sauce** | 1 year | 6 months, opened | |
| **Herbs** | 1-2 years | 1-2 years | |
| **Herb/spice blends** | 6 months | | |
| **Mustard** | 1-2 years | 1 year, opened | |
| **Spices, ground** | 2-3 years | | |
| **Spices, ground** | 2-3 years, opened | | |
| **Spices, whole** | 3-4 years | | |
| **Spices, whole** | 3-4 years, opened | | |
| **Vanilla extract** | 2 years | | |
| **Vanilla extract** | 1 year, opened | | |
| **Other extracts** | 2 years | | |
| **Other extracts** | 1 year, opened | | |

Table 4. Recommendations for storing other food staples

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Bacon bits** | 1 year | Package use-by date, opened | |
| **Baking powder** | 6-18 months | | |
| **Baking powder** | 3-6 months, opened | | |
| **Baking soda** | 2-3 years | | |
| **Baking soda** | 6 months, opened | | |
| **Bouillon (dry)** | 1 year | | |
| **Bouillon (dry)** | 1 year, opened | | |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Carbonated soft drinks (bottles or cans)** | | 2-3 days, opened | |
| **Chocolate syrup** | 2 years | 6 months, opened | |
| **Chocolate, semisweet and unsweetened** | 1-2 years | | |
| **Chocolate, semisweet and unsweetened** | 1 year, opened | | |
| **Cocoa mixes** | Indefinitely | | |
| **Cocoa mixes** | 1 year, opened | | |
| **Coconut, shredded** | 1 year | 8 months, opened | 1 year |
| **Coffee, ground** | 2 years | 1 month, opened | 6-12 months |
| **Coffee, ground** | 2 weeks, opened | | |
| **Coffee, instant** | 1 year | | |
| **Coffee, instant** | 2-3 months, opened | | |
| **Coffee, whole beans** | 3-5 months | 3-4 months, opened | |
| **Coffee, whole beans** | 3-5 months, opened | | |
| **Coffee creamer (liquid)** | | 3 weeks | |
| **Coffee creamer (powdered)** | 2 years | 1 year | |
| **Coffee creamer (powdered)** | 2-3 months, opened | | |
| **Cornstarch** | 18-24 months | | |
| **Cornstarch** | 18 months, opened | | |
| **Gelatin** | 3 years | | |
| **Honey** | 2 years | | |
| **Jams, jellies, and preserves** | 6-18 months | 6-12 months, opened | |
| **Syrup** | 1 year | 6 months, opened | |
| **Marshmallows** | 1 year | | |
| **Marshmallows** | 1 month, opened | | |
| **Marshmallow cream** | 2-5 months | | |
| **Marshmallow cream** | 1 month, opened | | |
| **Mayonnaise** | 3-6 months | 2 months | |
| **Molasses** | 1-2 years | | |
| **Molasses** | 6 months, opened | | |
| **Nuts, shelled** | 2-4 weeks | 9-12 months | 24 months |
| **Nuts, unshelled** | 2-4 weeks | 9-12 months | 24 months |
| **Oil, salad** | 6-12 months | 4 months, opened | |
| **Oil, salad** | 3-5 months, opened | | |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Parmesan grated cheese** | | 1 year | |
| **Pasteurized process cheese spread** | 2 years | 2 weeks, opened | 3 months |
| **Peanut butter** | 6-24 months | | |
| **Peanut butter** | 2-3 months, opened | | |
| **Popcorn, kernels** | 2 years | | |
| **Popcorn, kernels** | 1 year, opened | | |
| **Popcorn, microwave packets** | 6-12 months | | |
| **Popcorn, microwave packets** | 1-2 days, cooked | | |
| **Popcorn, popped in bags** | 6-12 months | | |
| **Popcorn, popped in bags** | 1-2 days, cooked | | |
| **Pectin** | Package use-by date | | |
| **Pectin** | 1 month, opened | | |
| **Salad dressings, bottled** | 10-12 months | 1-3 months, opened | |
| **Soft drinks** | | 2-3 days, opened | |
| **Artificial sweetener** | 2 years | | |
| **Artificial sweetener** | Indefinitely | | |
| **Sugar, brown** | Indefinitely | | |
| **Sugar, brown** | 18-24 months, opened | | |
| **Sugar, confectioners** | Indefinitely | | |
| **Sugar, confectioners** | 18-24 months, opened | | |
| **Sugar, granulated** | Indefinitely | | |
| **Sugar, granulated** | 18-24 months, opened | | |
| **Tea bags** | 18-36 months | | |
| **Tea bags** | 6-12 months, opened | | |
| **Tea, instant** | 2-3 years | | |
| **Tea, instant** | 6-12 months, opened | | |
| **Vegetable oils** | 6 months | 4 months, opened | |
| **Vegetable oils** | 3-5 months, opened | | |
| **Vegetable shortening** | 1-2 years | | |
| **Vegetable shortening** | 6-12 months, opened | | |
| **Vinegar** | 2 years | | |
| **Water, bottled** | Indefinitely | | |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Yeast, dry** | 2 years, refrigerate after opening | 4 months, opened | 6 months |

Table 5. Recommendations for storing vegetables

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Asparagus** | | 3-4 days | 5 months |
| **Beets** | 1 day | 1-2 weeks | 6-8 months |
| **Broccoli** | | 3-5 days | 10-12 months |
| **Brussels sprouts** | | 3-5 days | 10-12 months |
| **Cabbage** | | 1-2 weeks | 10-12 months |
| **Carrots, parsnips** | | 2-3 weeks | 10-12 months |
| **Cauliflower** | | 3-5 days | 10-12 months |
| **Celery** | | 1-2 weeks | 10-12 months |
| **Corn (on the cob)** | | 1-2 days | 8 months |
| **Cucumbers** | | 4-6 days | |
| **Eggplant** | 1 day | 4-7 days | 6-8 months |
| **Green beans** | | 3-5 days | 8 months |
| **Green peas** | | 3-5 days | 8 months |
| **Lettuce** | | 1-2 weeks | |
| **Lima beans** | | 3-5 days | 8 months |
| **Mushrooms** | | 3-7 days | 10-12 months |
| **Onions, yellow, white, red, etc.** | 1 month | 2 months | 10-12 months |
| **Onions, spring, green, etc.** | 1 month | 1 week | 10-12 months |
| **Peppers** | 4-14 days | 4-14 days | 6-8 months |
| **Pickles, canned** | 1 year | 1-3 months, opened | |
| **Frozen potatoes** | | | 1 year |
| **Sweet potatoes** | 2-3 weeks | | |
| **White potatoes** | 1-2 months | 1-2 weeks | 10-12 months, cooked |
| **Potato chips** | Package use-by date | | |
| **Potato chips** | 1-2 weeks | | |
| **Radishes** | | 10-14 days | |
| **Rhubarb** | | 3-7 days | |
| **Rutabagas** | 1 week | 2-3 weeks | 8-10 months |
| **Snap beans** | | 3-5 days | 8 months |
| **Spinach** | | 3-7 days | |
| **Squash, Summer** | 1-5 days | 4-5 days | 10-12 months |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Squash, Winter** | 2-6 weeks | 1-3 months | 10-12 months |
| **Tomatoes** | Until ripe | | 2 months |
| **Turnips** | | 2 weeks | 8-10 months |
| **Commercial baby food, jars** | | 2 days | |
| **Canned vegetables** | 2-5 years | 3-4 days | |
| **Canned vegetables, pickled** | 1 year | 1-2 months, opened | |
| **Dried vegetables** | 1 year | | |
| **Frozen vegetables** | | 3-4 days, cooked | 10-18 months |
| **Vegetable soup** | 2-5 years | 3-4 days | |

Table 6. Recommendations for storing fruits

| **Food** | **Pantry (Room Temperature)** | **Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F)** | **Freezer (32°F)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Apples** | 3 weeks | 4-6 months | 8 months, cooked |
| **Apricots** | Until ripe | 2-5 days | |
| **Avocados** | Until ripe | 3-4 days | |
| **Bananas** | Until ripe | 3 days | 2-3 months |
| **Berries** | | 3-6 days | 1 year |
| **Canned fruit and fruit juices** | 12-18 months | 5-7 days, opened | |
| **Cherries** | | 1 week | 1 year |
| **Citrus fruit** | 10 days | 10-21 days | |
| **Dried fruit** | 6 months | 6 months, opened | |
| **Dried fruit** | 1 month | | |
| **Frozen fruit** | | | 10-18 months |
| **Fruit juice concentrate** | | | 2 years |
| **Fruit, pre-cut, fresh** | | Package use-by date | 1 year |
| **Fruit, pre-cut, fresh** | | 4 days, opened | |
| **Grapes** | 1 day | 1 week | 1 month |
| **Melons** | Until ripe | 2 weeks | 1 month |
| **Melons** | | 2-4 days | |
| **Nectarines** | Until ripe | 3-5 days | 2 months |
| **Peaches** | Until ripe | 3-5 days | 2 months |
| **Pears** | Until ripe | 3-5 days | 2 months |
| **Pineapple** | Until ripe | 5-7 days | 10-12 months |
| **Plums** | Until ripe | 3-5 days | 2 months |

Table 7. Recommendations for storing dairy products

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Butter** | 1-2 days | 1-2 months | 6-9 months |
| **Buttermilk** | | 1-2 weeks | 3 months |
| **Cottage cheese** | | 2 weeks | |
| **Cottage cheese** | | 1 week, opened | |
| **Cream cheese** | | 2 weeks | |
| **Cream, heavy** | | 10 days | 3-4 months |
| **Cream, light** | | 1 week | 3-4 months |
| **Eggnog commercial** | | 3-5 days | 6 months |
| **Half-and-half** | | 3-4 days | 4 months |
| **Margarine** | | 6 months | 1 year |
| **Milk, canned, condensed, or evaporated** | 1 year | 4-5 days | |
| **Milk, fresh** | | Package use-by date | 3 months |
| **Milk, powdered** | 3-5 years | | |
| **Milk, powdered** | 3 months | | |
| **Milk, shelf-stable** | 6-12 months | 5-7 days | |
| **Milk, ultra-pasteurized** | | 1-3 months | |
| **Milk, ultra-pasteurized** | | 7-10 days, opened | |
| **Ice cream and sherbet** | | | 6 months |
| **Hard natural cheese (e.g., cheddar, Swiss)** | 6 months | 6 months | 6 months |
| **Hard natural cheese (e.g., cheddar, Swiss)** | 3-4 weeks, opened | 3-4 weeks, opened | |
| **Non-dairy milk (almond, coconut, rice, soy, etc.)** | | Package use-by date | |
| **Non-dairy milk (almond, coconut, rice, soy, etc.)** | | 7-10 days, opened | |
| **Processed cheese** | | 3-4 weeks | |
| **Soft cheese (e.g., brie)** | 1-2 weeks | 1-2 weeks | 6 months |
| **Pudding** | | Package use-by date | |
| **Pudding** | | 2 days, opened | |
| **Snack dips** | | 2 weeks | |
| **Sour cream** | | Package use-by date | |
| **Non-dairy whipped cream, tub** | | 2 weeks | 14 months |
| **Real whipped cream, canned** | | 3-4 weeks | |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Yogurt** | | 1-2 weeks | 1-2 months |

Table 8. Recommendations for storing meats

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Fresh beef and bison steaks** | | 3-5 days | |
| **Fresh beef and bison roasts** | | 3-5 days | |
| **Fresh pork chops** | | 3-5 days | |
| **Fresh lamb chops** | | 3-5 days | |
| **Fresh veal** | | 3-5 days | |
| **Fresh ground meat (e.g., beef, bison, veal, lamb)** | | 1-2 days | |
| **Cooked meat and meat dishes** | | 3-4 days, cooked | 2-3 months, cooked |
| **Ham, whole bone-in, fully cooked** | | 1 week | 1-2 months |
| **Ham, canned** | 6-9 months | 5-14 days, opened | |
| **Ham, canned "keep refrigerated"** | | 6-9 months | |
| **Shelf-stable unopened canned meat (e.g., chili, deviled ham, corned beef)** | 2-5 years | 3-4 days, opened | |
| **Ham, cook before eating** | | 1 week | 1-2 months |
| **Ham, uncured, cook before eating** | | 3-5 days | 6 months |
| **Ham, uncured, cooked** | | 3-4 days | 3-4 months |
| **Ham, dry-cured** | | 1 week | 1-2 months |
| **Ham salad, store-prepared or homemade** | | 3-4 days | |
| **Bacon, raw** | | 1 week | 1 month |
| **Bacon, raw** | | 1 week, opened | |
| **Bacon, fully cooked** | 6 months | 5-14 days, opened | |
| **Bacon, fully cooked** | | | |
| **Corned beef, uncooked** | | 5-7 days | 1 month |
| **Sausage, fresh** | | 1-2 days | 1-2 months |
| **Smoked breakfast sausage links, patties** | | 1 week | 1-2 months |
| **Sausage, smoked (e.g., kielbasa)** | | 1 week | 1-2 months |
| **Sausage, semi-dry (e.g., summer sausage)** | | 2-3 weeks, opened | 6 months |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Sausage, dry smoked (e.g., Pepperoni, jerky, dry Salami)** | | 2-3 weeks | 1-2 months |
| **Frankfurters, bologna** | | 2 weeks | 1-2 months |
| **Frankfurters, bologna** | | 1 week, opened | |
| **Luncheon meat** | | 2 weeks | 1-2 months |
| **Luncheon meat** | | 3-5 days, opened | |
| **Meat gravies** | | 3-4 days | 6 months |
| **TV beef and pork dinners** | 18 months, After the manufacture date | | 6 months |
| **Meat-based casseroles** | | 3-4 days | |
| **Variety meats (giblets, tongue, liver, heart, etc.)** | | 1-2 days | 3-4 months |

Table 9. Recommendations for storing fish and seafood

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Breaded fish** | | | 18 months |
| **Canned fish** | 2-5 years | 3-4 days, opened | |
| **Cooked fish or seafood** | | 3-4 days | |
| **Lean fish (e.g., cod, flounder, haddock)** | | 1-2 days | |
| **Fatty fish (e.g., bluefish, salmon, mackerel)** | | 1-2 days | |
| **Smoked fish** | | 14 days | 2 months |
| **Seafood, crab** | | 1-2 days | |
| **Seafood, lobster in the shell** | | 1 day | 1-2 months |
| **Seafood, clams, mussels, and oysters** | | 5-10 days | 6-8 months |
| **Seafood, shrimp** | | 3-4 days | 2-3 months |
| **Seafood, shucked clams, mussels, and oysters** | | 3-10 days | |
| **Tuna salad, store-bought or homemade** | 3-4 days | | |

Table 10. Recommendations for storing poultry

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Chicken nuggets or patties** | | 1-3 months | |
| **Chicken livers** | | 1-2 days | |
| **Chicken and poultry TV dinners** | | | 3-4 months |
| **Canned poultry** | 5 years | 3-4 days, opened | 3-4 months |
| **Cooked poultry** | | 3-4 days | |
| **Fresh poultry** | | 1-2 days | |
| **Frozen poultry parts** | | | 9 months |
| **Poultry pies, stews, and gravies** | | 3-4 days, cooked | 6 months, cooked |
| **Poultry salads, store-prepared or homemade** | | 3-5 days | |
| **Poultry stuffing, cooked** | | 3-4 days | 4-6 months |

Table 11. Recommendations for storing eggs

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Eggs, in shell** | | 3-5 weeks | 1 year |
| **Eggs, hard-boiled, peeled, and cooked** | | 1 week | |
| **Eggs, pasteurized, liquid** | | 10 days | 1 year |
| **Eggs, pasteurized, liquid** | | 3 days, opened | |
| **Egg substitute** | | 10 days | 1 year |
| **Egg substitute** | | 3 days, opened | |
| **Egg yolks (covered in water)** | | 2-4 days | 1 year |
| **Egg whites (For each cup of egg yolk, add 1 Tbs. of sugar or salt)** | | 2-4 days | 1 year |

Table 12. Recommendations for storing wild game

| Food | Pantry (Room Temperature) | Refrigerator (33°F to 40°F) | Freezer (32°F) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Game birds** | | 2 days | 6 months |
| **Small game (rabbit, squirrel, etc.)** | | 2 days | 1 year |
| **Venison ground meat** | | 5 days | 6 months |
| **Venison steaks and roasts** | | 1 week | 1 year |