



## The Food Keeper

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The Food Keeper contains valuable storage advice to help you maintain the freshness and quality of foods. The storage times listed in *The Food Keeper* are intended as useful guidelines and are not hard-and-fast rules. Some foods may deteriorate more quickly while others may last longer than the times suggested. The times will vary depending on the growing conditions, harvesting techniques, manufacturing processes, transportation and distribution conditions, nature of the food and storage temperatures. Remember to buy foods in reasonable quantities and rotate the products in your pantry, refrigerator and freezer.



## Preventing Food Waste

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Every year, billions of pounds of good food go to waste in the U.S. because consumers are not sure of its quality or safety. Food waste from households represents about 44% of all food waste generated in the U.S. It is estimated that 20 pounds of food is wasted per person per month. By reducing food waste through buying appropriate quantities, storing foods properly, cooking what is needed and composting, consumers can save money and reduce the amount of food going to landfills. The guidelines recommended in *The Food Keeper* can help consumers use food while at peak quality and reduce waste.



## Shopping

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- Shop for shelf-stable foods (those that are in boxes and cans) first. Place refrigerated or frozen items in the cart last, immediately before checking out.
- Do not choose meat, fish, poultry or dairy products that feel warm to the touch or have a damaged or torn package. To prevent leaking, wrap the package in a plastic bag.
- Buy only pasteurized dairy products.
- Choose only refrigerated eggs and make sure that they are not cracked or dirty.
- Check the “Sell-by,” “Use-by,” or “Best if used by” dates on food packages.
- Buy intact cans that are not rusted, bulging, leaking or dented on the seam or rim.
- Once you purchase food, take it directly home within two hours or within one hour if temperatures are above 90°F. If this is not possible, keep a cooler with freezer gels in the car to transport cold, perishable items. Immediately put perishables into the refrigerator or freezer.



## Storage—Pantry

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- The storage times listed for many shelf-stable items at room temperature are mainly a quality issue. Before opening, shelf-stable foods should be safe to eat unless the can or package has been damaged.
- Never use food from cans that are leaking, rusting, bulging, badly dented or with a foul odor, cracked jars or jars with loose or bulging lids, or any container that spurts liquid when you open it.



- To keep shelf-stable foods at their best quality, store them in a clean, dry, cool (below 85°F) cabinet away from the stove or the refrigerator's exhaust. Extremely hot (over 100°F) and freezing temperatures are harmful to canned goods.
- Do not buy or use infant formula and baby food past its "use-by" date. Federal regulations require a date on infant formula.
- Throw out any food you suspect is spoiled. NEVER taste it. Products that become contaminated (insects in flour, for example) should be thrown out immediately.
- In general, high-acid canned food such as tomatoes, grapefruit and pineapple can be stored on the shelf for 12 to 18 months. Low-acid canned food such as meat, poultry, fish and most vegetables will keep two to five years—if the can remains in good condition and has been stored in a cool, clean and dry place. Discard cans that are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted.
- Be sure to read package labels. Some items must be refrigerated after opening.

## Food Product Dating

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- Dates are printed voluntarily on many food items, but they are not required by the Federal Government. Food product dating can appear as open dates that are readable to consumers or closed dates that appear as codes on shelf-stable products such as cans and boxes of food. Both dating systems enable manufacturers and retailers to rotate their stock and can help with product tracing.





- Calendar dates help grocery stores determine how long to display the product for sale and relate to the peak quality of food, not safety. Calendar dates are found primarily on perishable foods, such as dairy products, eggs, meat and poultry.

**Here are the three ways that products are dated:**

- “Sell-by” date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before this date to ensure maximum quality.
- “Use-by” date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The date has been determined by the manufacturer of the product.
- “Best if used by (or before)” date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- “Closed or coded dates” are packing numbers used by the manufacturer.

It should be noted that the dates found on products are the food manufacturer’s recommendations regarding optimal quality of the product. The dates are not necessarily guides for food safety. For instance, a product may be safe to eat beyond the “best if used by” date, but would not be of highest quality.

Also, in most cases, the product date is determined for a product remaining unopened and stored in a proper manner. Once opened, the quality limits of the product will vary from the date printed on the package.





## Fresh Produce

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- Raw fruits and vegetables are safe to eat at room temperature, but, after ripening will mold and rot quickly. For best quality, store ripe fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator or prepare and freeze. But remember, there are some exceptions:
  - Some hardy, dense vegetables like onions, garlic, potatoes and winter squash can be stored in cool, dark places outside of the refrigerator.
  - Tomatoes taste best *not* refrigerated. They become mealy in cold storage.
  - Bananas will not ripen while cold; refrigeration will cause banana skin to blacken, but they are safe to eat.
  - Very fresh apples, mangoes and stone fruits can be stored at room temperature, but these items should be refrigerated as they ripen.
- When preparing any fresh produce, begin with clean hands. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before and after preparation. Wash produce under running water and dry with paper towels before preparation or eating. Even if you plan to peel produce before eating, wash it first so dirt and bacteria aren't transferred from the hand or knife onto the fruit or vegetable.
- In most cases, it is better to wash produce just before eating. If washed prior to storing in the refrigerator, the moisture can accelerate spoilage.





- Once fruits and vegetables are cut, chopped or cooked, they should be placed in the refrigerator or frozen in freezer containers within two hours.

## **Storage—Refrigerated Foods**

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- Refrigerate foods to maintain quality as well as to keep them safe. Cold temperatures keep foods fresh and inhibit the growth of most bacteria. However, food spoilage microorganisms can still grow and multiply slowly over time, so there is a limit to the length of time various foods will stay fresh in the refrigerator. Use the accompanying food storage information (see pp. 14–49) to help keep perishable foods safe.
- Always refrigerate perishable food within two hours (one hour when the temperature is above 90°F).
- Use a refrigerator/freezer thermometer to ensure your refrigerator is at 40°F or below and the freezer is at 0°F or below.
- Place meat, poultry and seafood in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Store eggs in their original carton on a shelf, not in the door.
- Leave meat, poultry and seafood in the store package before using. Repeated handling can introduce bacteria into food preparation areas. Place meat, poultry and seafood items on the lowest shelf to minimize leakage onto other stored foods.
- Be sure stored foods are tightly wrapped. When using a sealable bag, try to squeeze out as much air as possible. If using a plastic container, choose the smallest container that will hold your food. Store opened food in foil, plastic wrap, sealable plastic bags or airtight,



food storage containers to keep food from drying out. Remember, use these foods within the time guidelines in *The Food Keeper*.

- Clean the refrigerator regularly to remove spoiled food, odors and bacteria. Do not overload the refrigerator. Air must circulate freely to cool all foods evenly.

## Frozen Foods

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- Keep the freezer temperature at 0°F or below. Freezing to 0°F inactivates, but does not destroy, microbes such as bacteria, yeasts and molds that can be present in food. Once a frozen food is thawed, these microbes can become active and multiply to levels producing a potential health risk.
- To maintain quality when freezing meat and poultry in its original package, wrap the package again with foil or plastic wrap that is recommended for freezer storage.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Leaving food out on the counter encourages the growth of harmful bacteria.
- Foods can be safely thawed in three ways:
  - In a refrigerator
  - In a sealed package under cold, running water
  - In a microwave oven
- It is important to plan ahead because food may take several hours (or days depending on the food) to thaw in the refrigerator. Food thawed in the refrigerator can be refrozen without cooking. Foods defrosted in cold water or in the microwave should be cooked immediately.



- Marinate food in the refrigerator, and do not re-use the marinade on the cooked food unless it is brought to a rolling boil.
- Frozen foods with freezer burn are still safe to eat, but may be dry in spots. Cut freezer-burned portions away either before or after cooking the food.
- Date each package before you freeze it. That way you will know when it was frozen and when you should use it or throw it away. Use the oldest items first.

## Shelf Stable Foods: Spices, Extracts, Condiments, and Sauces

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- Store spices in a tightly-capped container and keep them away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight. Replace their lids right after use. Avoid storing spices and herbs over the stove, near a dishwasher or sink, or near a window.
- Be sure to use a completely dry measuring spoon when dipping it into a jar of a spice or herb.
- Members of the red pepper family, including paprika and chili powder, will retain their color and flavor when stored in the refrigerator.
- Try not to sprinkle spices and herbs directly from the bottle into a steaming pot. Repeated exposure to heat and moisture will hasten flavor loss and could result in caking. Instead, measure them into a cup, measuring spoon or bowl and then add to your recipe.



## Clean

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- Keep EVERYTHING clean—hands, utensils, counters, cutting boards and sinks.





- Always WASH HANDS with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before preparing foods and after handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Remember to always wash your hands after using the bathroom.
- Equipment should also be washed with hot, soapy water.

## Cooking

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Use a clean food thermometer to make sure foods have reached a safe, minimum internal temperature. Be sure to follow USDA-FDA recommended cooking times found in the table below.

### USDA-FDA Recommended Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures

Food	Internal Temperature
Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb, Steaks, Roasts and Chops	145°F with 3 minute rest time
Fish	145°F
Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb Ground	160°F
Egg Dishes	160°F
Turkey, Chicken and Duck Whole, Pieces and Ground	165°F

- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. Do not use recipes in which the eggs remain raw or only partially cooked.
- With microwave cooking, it is important to stir and rotate the food for even cooking. Make sure there are no cold spots in the food, because bacteria can survive in these areas. When microwaving convenience foods, such as frozen meals, read and follow package cooking instructions.



- Bring soups, sauces and gravies to a boil when reheating; reheat leftovers to at least 165°F.
- Do not let juices from raw meat, poultry or seafood come in contact with ready-to-eat foods during shopping, in the refrigerator or during preparation.
- Always put cooked food on a clean plate that did not previously hold raw meat, poultry or seafood or unwashed produce.
- Consumers may choose either wood or a nonporous surface cutting board such as plastic, marble, glass or pyroceramic. Nonporous surfaces are easier to clean than wood.
- If possible, use different cutting boards for raw meat and poultry, produce and ready-to-eat foods. When using cutting boards, make sure that they are thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.

## Leftovers

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- Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than two hours. If the room temperature is above 90°F, food should be discarded after one hour.
- Place food into shallow containers and immediately put in the refrigerator or freezer for rapid cooling.
- Use cooked leftovers within four days.
- Reheat leftovers to 165°F.
- Refreezing: meat and poultry defrosted in the refrigerator may be refrozen before or after cooking. If thawed by other methods, cook before refreezing.



## Handling Food Safely During a Power Outage

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To be prepared, keep an appliance thermometer in both the refrigerator and freezer to monitor the temperature.

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer door closed.
- A full freezer will stay frozen for about two days; a half-full freezer about one day.
- Refrigerated foods should be safe as long as the power is out for no more than four hours.
- If you think the power will be out for several days, locate some block ice, bags of ice or dry ice to put in the freezer along with your refrigerated perishable food, or keep the food continually iced in an insulated cooler.
- Foods thawed and held above 40°F for more than two hours should be discarded. Any perishable food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture, or feels warm to the touch should also be discarded.
- If you have any doubts about the safety of any item in your refrigerator after power is restored, discard it.



## Handling Food Safely

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Many cases of foodborne illness occur each year due to improper handling of food in the home. Microorganisms multiply rapidly at temperatures between 40°F and 140°F. Unfortunately, the harmful bacteria that cause most cases of foodborne illness cannot be seen, smelled or tasted. Therefore, it is important to **keep cold foods cold (40°F or below) and hot foods hot (140°F or above)** and follow these additional rules from the Partnership for Food Safety Education's FightBAC!® and Food Safe Families campaign:

1. **CLEAN:** Wash hands and surfaces often and thoroughly.
2. **SEPARATE:** Do not cross-contaminate raw and cooked foods.
3. **COOK:** Cook foods to recommended and safe internal temperatures.
4. **CHILL:** Refrigerate perishable foods within two hours. Remember to keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below.

**For more information go to:**  
[www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) and [foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov)



## Food Storage Times

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## Dairy Products & Eggs

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Butter	1–3 Months	6–9 Months
Buttermilk	1–2 Weeks	3 Months
Cheese, hard (such as cheddar, swiss, block parmesan)	Unopened: 6 Months; Opened: 3–4 Weeks	6 Months
Cheese, parmesan, shredded	12 Months	3–4 Months
Cheese, shredded, cheddar, mozzarella, etc.	1 Month	3–4 Months
Cheese, processed slices	3–4 Weeks	Does not freeze well
Cheese, soft (such as brie, bel paese)	1–2 Weeks	6 Months
Coffee creamer, liquid refrigerated	3 Weeks	See package instructions
Cottage cheese, ricotta	Unopened: 2 weeks; Opened: 1 Week	Does not freeze well
Cream cheese	2 Weeks	Does not freeze well
Cream, whipping, ultrapasteurized	Unopened: 1 Month; Opened: 1 Week	Do not freeze

<b>Cream, whipped, sweetened</b>	1 Day	1-2 Months
<b>Cream, half and half</b>	3-4 Days	4 Months
<b>Cream, heavy</b>	10 Days	3-4 Months
<b>Cream, light</b>	1 Week	3-4 Months; use for cooking
<b>Dips, sour cream based</b>	2 Weeks	Do not freeze
<b>Egg substitutes, liquid</b>	10 Days	Do not freeze
<b>Egg substitutes, unopened</b>	10 Days	Do not freeze
<b>Egg substitutes, opened</b>	3 Days	Do not freeze
<b>Eggnog, commercial</b>	3-5 Days	6 Months
<b>Eggs, in shell</b>	3-5 Weeks	Not recommended
<b>Eggs, raw whites and yolks</b>	2-4 Days	12 Months
<b>Eggs, hard boiled (cooked)</b>	1 Week	Does not freeze well

## Dairy Products & Eggs

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Kefir (fermented milk)	Unopened: 1 Week; Opened: 1–2 Days	Do not freeze
Margarine	6 Months	12 Months
Milk, plain or flavored	1 Week	3 Months
Pudding	Package use-by date; Opened: 2 Days	Do not freeze
Sour cream	7–21 Days; package use-by date	Does not freeze well
Whipped cream, aerosol can	3–4 Weeks	Do not freeze
Whipped topping, aerosol can	3 Months	Do not freeze
Whipped topping, tub	2 Weeks	14 Months
Yogurt	7–14 Days	1–2 Months



## Meat—Fresh

Meat—Fresh		Refrigerated	Frozen
Product			
Beef, lamb, pork or veal chops, steaks, roasts	3–5 Days		4–12 Months
Ground meat or stew meat	1–2 Days		3–4 Months
Variety meats (liver, tongue, chitterlings, etc.)	1–2 Days		3–4 Months
Cooked meats (after home cooking—leftovers)	3–4 Days		2–3 Months

## Meat—Smoked or Processed

Meat—Smoked or Processed		Refrigerated	Frozen
Product			
Bacon	1 Week		1 Month
Bacon, once opened	1 Week		1 Month
Corned beef, in pouch with pickling juices	5–7 Days		1 Month

## Meat—Smoked or Processed

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Ham, canned (“keep refrigerated” label)	6–9 Months	Do not freeze
Ham, fully cooked, whole	1 Week	1–2 Months
Ham, fully cooked, slices, half, or spiral cut	3–4 Days	1–2 Months
Ham, cook before eating	1 Week	1–2 Months
Hot dogs, sealed in package	2 Weeks	1–2 Months
Hot dogs, after opening	1 Week	1–2 Months
Lunch meats, sealed in package	2 Weeks	1–2 Months
Lunch meats, after opening	3–5 Days	1–2 Months
Sausage, raw bulk type or patties	1–2 Days	1–2 Months
Sausage, fully cooked smoked links, kielbasa	1 Week	1–2 Months

Sausage, hard, dry (pepperoni), sliced	2–3 Weeks	1–2 Months
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### Poultry—Fresh

Refrigerated		Frozen
Chicken or turkey, whole	1–2 Days	12 Months
Chicken or turkey parts	1–2 Days	9 Months
Duckling or goose, whole	1–2 Days	6 Months
Giblets	1–2 Days	3–4 Months

### Meat and Poultry—Stuffed or Assembled

Refrigerated		Frozen
Stuffed, raw pork chops or chicken breasts	1–2 Days	9 Months
Raw kabobs with vegetables	1–2 Days	3–4 Months
Turducken	Cook immediately	9 Months

## Poultry—Cooked or Processed

Product		Refrigerated	Frozen
Chicken nuggets, patties		1–2 Days	1–3 Months
Cooked poultry dishes		3–4 Days	4–6 Months
Fried chicken		3–4 Days	4 Months
Ground turkey or chicken		1–2 Days	3–4 Months
Lunch meats, sealed in package		2 Weeks	1–2 Months
Lunch meats, after opening		3–5 Days	1–2 Months
Poultry pieces covered in broth or gravy		3–4 Days	1–2 Months
Rotisserie chicken		3–4 Days	4 Months

## Fresh Fish

Product		Refrigerated	Frozen
Lean fish (cod, flounder, haddock, halibut, sole, etc.)		4–6 Days	6–10 Months

Lean fish (pollock, ocean perch, rockfish, sea trout)	4–6 Days	4–8 Months
Fatty fish (bluefish, mackerel, mullet, salmon, tuna, etc.)	4–6 Days	2–3 Months
Caviar, fresh, in jar	Unopened: 1–4 Weeks; Opened: 2 Days	Does not freeze well
Cooked fish, all	3–4 Days	1–2 Months
Surimi seafood	3 Months or package use-by date	9 Months

## Shellfish

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Shrimp, scallops, crayfish, squid	1–3 Days	6–18 Months
Shucked clams, mussels, and oysters	3–10 Days	3–4 Months
Crab meat, fresh	1–3 Days	2–4 Months
Crab meat, pasteurized	Unopened: 10–12 Months; Opened: 3–5 Days	4–10 Months

## Shellfish

Refrigerated		Frozen
Product		
Crab legs, king, dungeness, snow	2-4 Days	9-12 Months
Live clams, mussels, crab, and oysters	1-2 Days	2-3 Months
Live lobsters	Up to 2 weeks in a chilled tank	Do not freeze
Fresh lobster tails	1-2 Days	2-4 Weeks
Fresh clams, mussels, oysters	5-10 Days	Do not freeze
Fresh whole lobster	1-2 Days	Do not freeze
Cooked shellfish, all	3-4 Days	1-3 Months

## Smoked Fish

Refrigerated		Frozen
Product		
Herring, glass packed, in wine sauce	8-12 Months	Do not freeze
Fish, hot smoked, air pack	14-45 Days	9-12 Months

Fish, hot smoked, vacuum pack	14–45 Days	6 Months–1 Year
Fish, cold smoked, air pack	14–30 Days	9–12 Months
Fish, cold smoked, vacuum pack	21–30 Days	9–12 Months

### Vegetarian Proteins

Product	Storage	
	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerated
Tofu		Package use-by date or Unopened: 1 Week; Opened: 2–3 Days
Miso		1 Year
Soy flour, full-fat	2 Months	6 Months
Textured soy protein (TSP)	Unopened: 2 Years; Opened: 3–4 Months	
Re-hydrated TSP	3–4 Months	Opened: 3–4 Days
		Frozen
		5 Months
		Not recommended

## Deli & Prepared Foods

Deli Product	Refrigerator	Freezer
Cheese, store sliced hard cheese such as cheddar or swiss	3-4 Weeks	6 Months
Cheese, soft (such as brie, bel paese, goat cheese, fresh mozzarella)	1-2 Weeks	6 Months
Chicken, rotisserie or fried	3-4 Days	4 Months
Commercial brand vacuum packed dinners with USDA seal	2 Weeks	Does not freeze well
Cooked pasta	3-5 Days	1-2 Months
Cooked rice	4-6 Days	6 Months
Fruit, cut	Package use-by date; Opened: 4 Days	Do not freeze
Guacamole	5-7 Days	6 Months
Hummus, pasteurized	3 Months	Does not freeze well
Hummus, with preservatives	2 Months	Does not freeze well



<b>Hummus, traditional (no preservatives, not pasteurized)</b>	7 Days	Does not freeze well
<b>Luncheon meats, store-sliced</b>	3-5 Days	1-2 Months
<b>Main dishes or meals, hot or refrigerated</b>	3-4 Days	2-3 Months
<b>Meats covered with gravy or broth</b>	3-4 Days	6 Months
<b>Olives</b>	2 Weeks	Do not freeze
<b>Pate</b>	1-2 Days	1-2 Months
<b>Pudding</b>	Package use-by date; Opened: 2 Days	Do not freeze
<b>Salads containing meat, fish, poultry or eggs</b>	3-4 Days	Do not freeze
<b>Salads, vegetable</b>	3-5 Days	Do not freeze
<b>Side dishes such as cooked vegetables, rice or potatoes</b>	3-4 Days	1-2 Months
<b>Soup, stews</b>	3-4 Days	2-3 Months

## Bakery Products

Bakery Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	Freezer
Commercial bread products (including pan breads, flat breads, rolls and buns)	14–18 Days	2–3 Weeks	3–5 Months
Tortillas	3 Months	3 Months	6 Months
Commercial cakes and muffins	3–7 Days	7–10 Days	6 Months
Cheesecake		5–7 Days	3–6 Months
Cookies, soft	2–3 Months		8–12 Months
Cookies, crispy	4–6 Months		8–12 Months
Dairy filled eclairs		2–3 Days	3 Months
Doughnuts	1 –2 Days	2 Days	Does not freeze well
Fruit cake	6 Months	12 Months	12 Months

Pastries, danish	5–10 Days	14 Days	Does not freeze well
Pies, chiffon		1–2 Days	Do not freeze
Pies, cream		3–4 Days	Does not freeze well
Pies, fruit	1–2 Days	1 Week	8 Months
Pies, mincemeat	2 Hours	1 Week	8 Months
Pies, pecan	2 Hours	3–4 Days	1–2 Months
Pies, pumpkin	2 Hours	3–4 Days	1–2 Months
Quiche	2 Hours	3–5 Days	2–3 Months

### Fresh Fruits

Fruit	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
Apples	3 Weeks	4–6 Weeks	Cooked: 8 Months
Apricots	Until ripe	2–5 Days	Do not freeze
Avocados	Until ripe	3–4 Days	Do not freeze

## Fresh Fruits

Fruit	Pantry	Refrigerator	Freezer
Bananas	Until ripe	3 Days, skin will blacken	2–3 Months
Berries, cherries, goose berries, lychee	Until ripe	7 Days	12 Months
Black berries, boysen berries, currant, raspberries, strawberries	Until ripe	3–6 Days	12 Months
Blueberries	Until ripe	10 Days	12 Months
Cherimoya	Until ripe	4 Days	10–12 Months
Citrus fruit	10 Days	1–3 Weeks	Do not freeze
Coconut, shredded	Unopened: 1 Year; Opened: 6 Months	8 Months	1 Year
Coconuts, fresh, whole, unopened	1 Week	2–3 Weeks	Do not freeze
Cranberries		2 Months	12 Months

<b>Dates</b>	<b>2 Months</b>	<b>12 Months</b>	<b>1–2 Years</b>
<b>Grapes</b>	1 Day	1 Week	Whole, 1 Month
<b>Guava</b>	Until ripe—they spoil quickly	2–4 Days	Does not freeze well
<b>Kiwi fruit</b>	Until ripe	3–6 Days	Do not freeze
<b>Melons</b>	Until ripe, then up to 7 Days	Whole: 2 Weeks; Cut: 2–4 Days	Balls, 1 Month
<b>Papaya, mango, feijoa, passionfruit, casaha melon</b>	3–5 Days	1 Week	6–8 Months
<b>Peaches, nectarines, plums, pears, sapote</b>	Until ripe, then 1–2 Days	3–5 Days	Sliced, lemon juice and sugar, 2 Months
<b>Pineapple</b>	Until ripe, then 1–2 Days	5–7 Days	10–12 Months
<b>Plantains</b>	Until ripe, then 1–2 Days	3–5 Days	10–12 Months
<b>Pomegranate</b>	2–5 Days	1–3 Months	10–12 Months

## Fresh Vegetables

Vegetable	Pantry	Raw, Refrigerator	Frozen*
Artichokes, whole	1–2 Days	1–2 Weeks	Do not freeze
Asparagus		3–4 Days	5 Months
Bamboo shoots		Whole unpeeled: 2 Weeks; Peeled and parboiled in water: 5 Days	
Beans (green, fava, lima, soybean, wax) and peas		3–5 Days	8 Months
Beets	1 Day	7–14 Days	6–8 Months
Bok choy		2–3 Days	10–12 Months
Broccoli and broccoli raab (rapini)		3–5 Days	10–12 Months
Brussels sprouts		3–5 Days	10–12 Months
Cabbage		1–2 Weeks	10–12 Months

<b>Carrots and parsnips</b>		2-3 Weeks	10-12 Months
<b>Cauliflower</b>		3-5 Days	10-12 Months
<b>Celery</b>		1-2 Weeks	10-12 Months
<b>Corn on the cob</b>		1-2 Days	8 Months
<b>Cucumbers</b>		4-6 Days	Do not freeze
<b>Eggplant</b>	1 Day	4-7 Days	6-8 Months
<b>Garlic</b>	1 Month (unbroken bulbs)	3-14 Days (individual cloves)	1 Month
<b>Ginger root</b>	2-5 Days	2-3 Weeks	6 Months
<b>Greens</b>		1-4 Days	10-12 Months
<b>Herbs</b>		7-10 Days	1-2 Months
<b>Leeks</b>		1-2 Weeks	10-12 Months
<b>Lettuce, iceberg, romaine</b>		1-2 Weeks	Do not freeze
<b>Lettuce, leaf, spinach</b>		3-7 Days	Do not freeze

\*It is recommended to blanch or cook vegetables before freezing.

## Fresh Vegetables

Vegetable	Shelf	Raw, Refrigerator	Frozen*
Mushrooms		3-7 Days	10-12 Months
Okra	Highly perishable; 1 Day	2-3 Days	10-12 Months
Onions, dry	1 Month	2 Months	10-12 Months
Onions, spring or green	1 Month	1 Week	10-12 Months
Peppers		4-14 Days	6-8 Months
Potatoes	1-2 Months	1-2 Weeks	Cooked and mashed: 10-12 Months
Pumpkins	2-3 Months	3-5 Months	
Radishes		10-14 Days	Do not freeze
Rhubarb		3-7 Days	
Rutabagas	1 Week	2-3 Weeks	8-10 Months
Squash, summer and zucchini	1-5 Days	4-5 Days	10-12 Months



<b>Squash, winter</b>	2–6 Weeks	1–3 Months	10–12 Months
<b>Tamarind</b>	1–3 Weeks	Just the pulp: 6 Months	Just the pulp: 1 Year
<b>Taro</b>	7 Days	2–3 Days (not recommended)	
<b>Tomatoes</b>	Until ripe, then up to 7 Days	2–7 Days	2 Months
<b>Turnips</b>		2 Weeks	8–10 Months
<b>Yucca/cassava</b>	7 Days	3 Days	1–2 Months

\*It is recommended to blanch or cook vegetables before freezing.

### Foods Purchased Frozen

Frozen Product		Freezer	Refrigerator After Thawing
<b>Bagels</b>	6 Months		1–2 Weeks
<b>Burritos, sandwiches</b>	2 Months (follow package instructions)		3–4 Days

## Foods Purchased Frozen

Frozen Product	Freezer	Refrigerator After Thawing
Dough, commercial (bread or cookie)	Package use-by date	After baking, 4–7 Days
Egg substitutes	12 Months	Package use-by date
Fish, breaded	18 Months	Do not defrost; cook frozen
Fish, raw but headed and gutted	6 Months	1–2 Days
Frozen potato products (fries, hashbrowns, tater tots)	6–12 Months	Not recommended
Frozen pretzels	9–12 Months	2–3 Weeks
Fruits such as berries, melons	4–6 Months	4–5 Days
Guacamole	3–4 Months	3–4 Days
Ice cream	2–4 Months	Not recommended
Ice pops	9 Months	Not recommended
Juice concentrates	1–2 Years	7–10 Days

Lobster tails	2–4 Weeks	2 Days
Pancakes, waffles	2 Months	3–4 Days
Sausages, uncooked	1–2 Months	1–2 Days
Sausage, precooked	1–2 Months	1 Week
Sherbet, sorbet	2–4 Months	Not recommended
Shrimp and shellfish	12–18 Months	1–2 Days
Soy crumbles and hot dogs	9 Months	3–4 Days
Soy meat substitutes	12–18 Months	3–4 Days
Tempeh	6 Months	1–2 Weeks
Topping, whipped	6 Months	2 Weeks
Frozen meals, entrees and breakfast foods	3 Months	Do not defrost; cook frozen
Vegetables	8 Months	3–4 Days

## Grains, Beans & Pasta

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry After Opening
Beans, dried	1–2 Years		1 Year
Lentils, dried	12 Months		12 Months
Pasta, dry, without eggs	2 Years		1 Year
Dry egg noodles	2 Years		1–2 Months
Peas, dried split	12 Months		12 Months
Rice, white or wild	2 Years	6 Months	1 Year
Rice, brown	1 Year	6 Months	1 Year

## Baking & Cooking

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry After Opening
Baking powder	6–18 Months		3–6 Months
Baking soda	2–3 Years		6 Months
Biscuit or pancake mix	12 Months		Package use-by date
Cake, brownie, bread mixes	12–18 Months		Package use-by date
Chocolate, unsweetened and semi-sweet, solid	1–2 Years		1 Year
Cocoa and cocoa mixes	Indefinitely		1 Year
Cornmeal, regular, degerminated	6–12 Months	1 Year	2 Years
Cornmeal, stone ground or blue	1 Month	2–4 Months	Not recommended
Cornstarch	18–24 Months		18 Months

## Baking & Cooking

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry After Opening
Extracts, vanilla, lemon, etc.*	4 Years		4 Years*
Flour, white	6–12 Months	1 Year	6–8 Months
Flour, whole wheat	3–6 Months	6–8 Months	
Frosting or icing	10–12 Months	2–3 Weeks	Check label
Gelatin, flavored	18 Months		Use entire packet; 3–4 Months
Gelatin, unflavored	3 Years		Use entire packet
Nut oils	6 Months		
Oils, olive or vegetable	6–12 Months	4 Months	3–5 Months
Shortening, solid	1–2 Years		6–12 Months
Sugar, brown	18 Months		Sugar never spoils
Sugar, confectioners	18 Months		Sugar never spoils

\* Pure vanilla extract lasts indefinitely.

Sugar, granulated	2 Years		Sugar never spoils
Sugar substitutes	2 Years	Never spoils	
Tamarind paste	6–12 Months	2–3 Months	6 Months
Tapiocas	12 Months	12 Months	
Vegetable oil sprays	2 Years		1 Year
Yeast	See expiration date		

### Baking & Cooking—Spices

Product	Unopened in Pantry		In Pantry After Opening
Chili powder	2 Years total		2 Years
Flavored or herb mixes	6 Months		
Herbs, dried	1–2 Years		1–2 Years
Seasoning blends	1–2 Years		1–2 Years
Spice, ground	2–3 Years total		2–3 Years
Spices, whole	3–4 Years total		3–4 Years

## Refrigerated Dough & Pasta

Product	Refrigerated	Frozen
Cookie dough	Package use-by date	2 Months
Fresh pasta, sold refrigerated	Package use-by date or 1–2 Days	2 Months
Ready-to-bake pie crust	Package use-by date	2 Months
Tube cans of biscuits, rolls, pizza dough, etc.	Package use-by date	Do not freeze

## Condiments & Sauces

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening
Barbecue sauce, bottled	12 Months	4 Months
Chutney	12 Months	1–2 Months
Dry cream sauce mixes	6–12 Months	
Dry gravy mixes	2 Years	1–2 Days
Gravy, jars and cans	2–5 Years	1–2 Days



<b>Honey</b>	2 Years*		
<b>Horseradish, in jar</b>	12 Months		3–4 Months
<b>Jams, jellies and preserves</b>	6–18 Months		6–12 Months
<b>Ketchup, cocktail or chili sauce</b>	12 Months		6 Months
<b>Marinades</b>	1 Year		6 Months
<b>Mayonnaise, commercial</b>	3–6 Months		For best quality: 2 Months
<b>Mustard</b>	1–2 Years		12 Months
<b>Olives, black and green</b>	12–18 Months		2 Weeks
<b>Pickles</b>	12 Months		1–3 Months
<b>Pesto, jarred</b>	6 Months		Refrigerator: 3 Days Freezer: 1 Month
<b>Pesto, refrigerated</b>			Unopened: 1 Week; Opened: 3 Days
<b>Salad dressings, commercial, bottled</b>	10–12 Months		1–3 Months
<b>Salsa, picante and taco sauces</b>	12 Months		1 Month

\* Opened or unopened.

## Condiments and Sauces

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening
Sauce mixes, nondairy (spaghetti, taco, etc.)	2 Years	
Spaghetti sauce in jars	18 Months	4 Days
Soy sauce or teriyaki sauce	3 Years	1 Month
Vinegar	2 Years	1 Year
Worcestershire sauce	2 Years	1 Year

## Shelf Stable Food—Baby Food

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry after Opening
Baby food, jars or pouches	Package use-by date	2–3 Days	
Baby food, fruit	Package use-by date	3 Days	
Baby food, vegetables	Package use-by date	2 Days	

Baby food, dinners	Package use-by date	2 Days	
Baby food, cereal and dry mixes	Package use-by date	1–2 Months	2 Months
Formula, prepared	Package use-by date	24 Hours	1 Hour
Liquid concentrate or ready-to-feed formula	Package use-by date	48 Hours	

### Shelf Stable Foods—Meat and Poultry

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerate after Opening
Bacon, fully cooked	Unopened, until the package use-by date	5–14 Days
Ham, shelf-stable cans	6–9 Months in the pantry	3–4 Days
Jerky, commercially dried	12 Months	2–3 Months
Jerky, homemade	1–2 Months	1–2 Months
Meat products, canned	5 Years	3–4 Days
Retort pouches or boxes	Use package recommendations	3–4 Days

## Shelf Stable Foods—Other Items

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry after Opening
Applesauce, commercial	12–18 Months	7–10 Days	Do not store in pantry after opening
Bacon bits, imitation	1 Year	Package use-by date	1 Year
Canned goods, low acid (such as meat, poultry, fish, gravy, stew, soups, beans, carrots, corn, pasta, peas, potatoes, spinach)	2–5 Years	3–4 Days	Do not store in pantry after opening
Canned goods, high acid (such as juices, fruit, pickles, sauerkraut, tomato soup, and foods in vinegar-based sauce)	12–18 Months	5–7 Days	Do not store in pantry after opening
Cereal, ready-to-eat	6–12 Months		2–3 Months

<b>Cereal, cook before eating (oatmeal, etc.)</b>	12 Months		6–12 Months
<b>Chocolate syrup</b>	2 Years	6 Months	Not recommended
<b>Crackers</b>	8 Months	Refrigerator or freezer: 3–4 Months	1 Month
<b>Garlic, chopped, commercial jars</b>	8–12 Months	Refrigerate: package use-by date	
<b>Graham crackers and animal crackers</b>	6–9 Months		
<b>Fruits, dried</b>	6 Months	6 Months	1 Month
<b>Gummy (fruit) snacks</b>	6–9 Months		6 Months
<b>Marshmallows</b>	1 Year		1 Month
<b>Marshmallow crème</b>	2–5 Months		1 Month
<b>Milk, canned evaporated or condensed</b>	12 Months	4–5 Days	
<b>Molasses</b>	1–2 Years		6 Months

## Shelf Stable Foods—Other Items

Product	Unopened in Pantry		Refrigerator After Opening	
	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator After Opening	Refrigerator After Opening	In Pantry after Opening
Mushrooms, dried	1–2 Years			3 Months
Nuts, jars or cans	12 Months		Refrigerator: 4–6 Months Freezer: 6–12 Months	2–9 Months
Peanut butter, commercial	6–24 Months			2–3 Months
Pectin	Package use-by date			1 Month
Popcorn, dry kernels in jar	2 Years			1 Year
Popcorn, commercially popped in bags	2–3 Months			1–2 Weeks
Popcorn, microwave packets	6–12 Months			1–2 Days popped
Potato chips	Package use-by date; 2 Months			1–2 Weeks
Potatoes, instant	10–15 Months			6–12 Months

<b>Pretzels</b>	4–9 Months		3 Weeks
<b>Pudding mixes</b>	12 Months		3–4 Months
<b>Soup mixes, dry bouillon</b>	12 Months		12 Months
<b>Sun dried tomatoes</b>	1 Year	3–6 Months	3–6 Months
<b>Syrup, genuine or real maple</b>	12 Months	6 Months	Not recommended
<b>Syrup, pancake</b>	12 Months	12 Months	12 Months
<b>Toaster pastries</b>	6–12 Months		1–2 Weeks

## Beverages

Product	Unopened in Pantry	Refrigerator after Opening	In Pantry after Opening
Coffee, whole beans	3-5 Months	For all types, 3-4 Months	3-5 Months
Coffee, ground, non-vacuum	3-5 Months	Freezer: 1-2 Years	3-5 Weeks
Coffee, instant	12 Months		2-3 Months
Diet powder mixes and drink mixes	18-24 Months		1-3 Months
Juice, sold refrigerated		Package use-by date or 6-10 Days	
Juice, sold shelf stable (bottles, boxes or cans)	Package best-by date or 4-12 Months	Package use-by date or 8-12 Days	
Nectar such as papaya, mango, guava, or guavabana	12-18 Months	Refrigerator: 5-7 Days Freezer: 8-12 Months	



<b>Soda such as carbonated cola drinks, mixers, diet sodas, bottles or cans</b>	Package use-by date (about 3 months for bottles; 9 months for cans)	2-3 Days	2-3 Days
<b>Soy or rice beverage</b>	Refrigerator unopened: 6 Months	Refrigerator: 7-10 Days Freezer: 3 Months	
<b>Soy or rice beverage, refrigerated</b>	Refrigerator unopened: 6 Months	Refrigerator: 7-10 Days Freezer: 3 Months	
<b>Tea, bags</b>	18-36 Months		6-12 Months
<b>Tea, instant</b>	2-3 Years		6-12 Months
<b>Tea, loose</b>	2 Years	Matcha tea is the only tea that can be frozen after opening	6-12 Months
<b>Water</b>	1-2 Years*	2 Weeks	3 Months

\* Considered safe indefinitely.



## References

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### **USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline:**

1-888-674-6854

10 AM—4 PM EST

e-mail: [mph hotline@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:mph hotline@fsis.usda.gov)

Food safety information is also available 24/7, by going to “Ask Karen,” our automated virtual representative at [askkaren.gov](http://askkaren.gov)

Food Safety fact sheets on a variety of topics are available at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov).

### **FoodSafety.gov**

Your gateway to Federal food safety information

### **U.S. Cooperative Extension Service**

A nationwide, non-credit educational network. Each U.S. state and territory has a state office at its land-grant university and a network of local or regional offices. These offices are staffed by one or more experts who provide useful, practical, and research-based information to agricultural producers, small business owners, youth, consumers, and others in rural areas and communities of all sizes. Find the Cooperative Extension office closest to you at: [csrees.usda.gov/Extension/](http://csrees.usda.gov/Extension/)

### **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**

[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

### **FDA Outreach and Information Center**

1-888-SAFEFOOD

1-888-723-3366

10 AM—4 PM EST



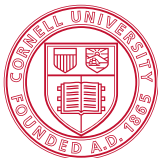
## Acknowledgements

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*The Food Keeper* was first published in 1985 as a joint project between the Department of Food Science at Cornell University, the Food Marketing Institute, the trade association for retail supermarkets and grocery wholesalers, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Hotline. *The Food Keeper* provided consumers throughout the U.S. with the first detailed compilation of the keeping quality of a wide variety of foods in different storage conditions. The popularity of *The Food Keeper* and the need to expand the list of foods resulted in subsequent revisions with this 4th Edition being published in 2014.

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Finally, the authors wish to thank you, the readers of the Food Keeper, for your interest in the safety and quality of the foods that you buy, store, prepare and consume. Storing foods properly, preparing them safely and consuming them at the peak of quality helps you and your family to enjoy the flavor and wholesomeness of these products while keeping them safe, minimizing spoilage and reducing food waste. We hope that you enjoy this publication.



Cornell University  
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