

FN579 (Revised May 2020)

Food Storage Guide

Answers the Question . . .

How long can I store

before its quality deteriorates or it's no longer safe to eat?

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D.
Food and Nutrition Specialist
NDSU Extension



Like many answers, this one depends on several factors:

the type of food, length of time the food sat on the store shelf before you bought it, the temperature of the food while it was in the store, its packaging, how efficiently your refrigerator or freezer runs and the temperature in your cupboards.

While you can't control all of these factors, you have some precautions you can take. For example, always read the package labels and buy the products with the most distant expiration dates.

When you're shopping, buy perishable foods, such as meats, last. In fact, you may want to organize your shopping list so your perishables are at the bottom. At home, put purchase dates on packaging and rotate your food supplies on a regular basis. Be sure to always use the "first in, first out" rule.

This publication provides handling tips and recommendations for storing food in your cupboards, refrigerator or freezer based on guidance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other sources. Beyond the guidelines, though, you still have to rely on some old-fashioned common sense.

**And remember the most basic of rules:
When in doubt, throw it out.**

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What Do Packaging Dates Mean?

The goal of date labels is to inform consumers of the date to which consumers can expect the food to retain its optimal quality, including flavor, color and/or texture. The food industry is moving to standardize the term “best if used by” with support from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 2020).

- “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 likely will see a marked deterioration in product quality (flavor, appearance, texture) after that date.
– Note: Do not use infant formula and baby food after the “use-by” date.
- “Closed or coded dates” are packing numbers used by the manufacturer. If a problem occurs with the food, it can be recalled.

For more information about nutrition, food safety and health, see www.ag.ndsu.edu/food.

Cupboard Storage Chart

- Store foods in cool cabinets and away from appliances that produce heat.
- Many staples and canned foods have a relatively long shelf life, but buy only what you can expect to use within the time recommended in the chart. Date food packages and use the oldest first. Foods stored for longer than recommended times or beyond the date on the package may change quality, color and flavor.
- Buy fresh-looking packages. Dusty cans or torn labels can indicate old stock. Do not purchase dented or bulging cans.

Staples

| Food | Storage | Handling Hints |
|--|---|---|
| Baking powder – unopened – opened | 6 to 18 months 3 to 6 months | Keep dry and covered. |
| Baking soda – unopened – opened | 2 to 3 years 3 to 6 months | Keep dry and covered. |
| Bouillon cubes or granules | 1 year | Keep dry and covered. |
| Bread crumbs (dried) | 6 months | Keep dry and covered. |
| Bread, rolls | 3 days | |
| Bulgur | 6 to 12 months | |
| Cereals – ready-to-eat, unopened – ready-to-eat, opened | 6 to 12 months 2 to 3 months | Check date on package. Refold package liner tightly after opening. |
| Hot cereal (dry) – unopened – opened | 12 months 6 to 12 months | |
| Chocolate (premelted) | 12 months | Keep cool. |
| Chocolate (semisweet, unsweetened) – unopened – opened | 1 to 2 years 1 year | Keep cool. |
| Cocoa | Indefinitely | |
| Chocolate syrup – unopened – opened | 2 years 6 months | Cover tightly; refrigerate after opening. |
| Cocoa mixes | 1 year | Cover tightly. |
| Coffee (cans) – unopened – opened (pantry) – opened (refrigerated) – frozen | 2 years 2 weeks 1 month 6 to 12 months | Use dry measuring spoon. Can be frozen to extend shelf life. |
| Coffee (instant) – unopened – opened | 1 year 2 to 3 months | |
| Coffee creamer, powdered – unopened, dry – opened, dry | 2 years 2 to 3 months | Store in a dry, cool environment. |

| Food | Storage | Handling Hints |
|---|---|---|
| Cornmeal – unopened – opened (pantry) – opened (refrigerator) | 6 to 12 months 2 years 1 year | Keep tightly covered. |
| Cornstarch – unopened – opened | 18 to 24 months 18 months | Keep tightly covered. |
| Flour (White) – unopened – opened (pantry) – opened (refrigerated) | 6 to 12 months 6 to 8 months 1 year | Can be frozen for indefinite storage. Keep in an airtight container. |
| Flour (Whole Wheat) – unopened – opened (refrigerated) | 3 to 6 months 6 to 8 months | Keep in an airtight container. |
| Gelatin (all types) – unopened – opened | 10 to 12 months 3 to 4 months | Keep in original container. |
| Grits | 12 months | Store in an airtight container. |
| Honey | 2 years | Cover tightly; if crystallizes, warm opened jar in pan of hot water. |
| Jellies, jams – unopened – opened | 6 to 18 months 6 to 12 months | Cover tightly; refrigerate after opening. |
| Molasses – unopened – opened | 1 to 2 years 6 months | Keep tightly covered. Refrigerate to extend storage life. |
| Marshmallow cream – unopened – opened | 2 to 5 months 1 month | Cover tightly. Serve at room temperature. |
| Marshmallows – unopened – opened | 1 year 1 month | Keep in an airtight container. |
| Mayonnaise – unopened – opened (refrigerated) | 3 to 6 months 2 months | Check the package date; refrigerate after opening. |
| Milk – condensed or evaporated • unopened • opened (refrigerated) – nonfat dry • unopened • opened | 12 months 4 to 5 days 3 months 3 months | Refrigerate after opening. Store in an airtight container. |
| Pasta – spaghetti, macaroni, etc. • unopened • opened – egg noodles • unopened • opened | 2 years 1 year 6 months 2 years 1 to 2 months | Once opened, store in an airtight container. |



| Food | Storage | Handling Hints |
|--|--|--|
| Pectin – opened | 1 month | Recap and refrigerate. |
| Rice – white, brown, wild • unopened • opened – flavored or herb | 1 to 2 years 1 to 2 years 1 year 6 months | Keep tightly covered. |
| Salad dressings – bottled, unopened – bottled, opened – made from mix | 10 to 12 months 1 to 3 months 2 weeks | Refrigerate after opening. Refrigerate prepared dressing. |
| Vegetable oils – unopened – opened (pantry) – opened (refrigerated) | 6 months 3 to 5 months 4 months | Refrigeration not needed; store in a cool, dark place in a tightly closed container. |
| Shortenings (solid) – unopened – opened (refrigerated) | 1 to 2 years 6 to 12 months | Refrigeration not needed; store in a cool, dark place in a tightly closed container. |
| Sugar – brown, confectioners, granulated – artificial sweeteners | 18 to 24 months 2 years | Put in an airtight container. Cover tightly. |
| Corn syrup | Up to 3 years | Keep tightly covered; refrigerate to extend storage life. Remove any light surface mold and heat to 180 F before use. |
| Pancake syrup – unopened – opened (refrigerated) | 1 year 6 months | Refrigerate after opening. |
| Tea – bags • unopened • opened – instant • unopened • opened – loose • unopened • opened | 18 to 36 months 6 to 12 months 2 to 3 years 6 to 12 months 2 years 6 to 12 months | Put in an airtight container. Cover tightly. Put in an airtight container. |
| Vinegar – unopened – opened | 2 years 12 months | Keep tightly covered. Slightly cloudy appearance doesn't affect quality. Distilled vinegar keeps longer than cider vinegar. |

Refrigerator/Freezer Storage Chart

- Use foil, plastic wrap, plastic bags or airtight containers designed for use with food for packaging foods for refrigerator storage. Moisture- and vapor-proof materials are best.
- Clean your refrigerator regularly to reduce food odors. Remove spoiled foods immediately so decay cannot pass to other foods.
- Store foods at cool temperatures. From 34 to 40 F is best. Perishable foods stored at temperatures above 40 F spoil rapidly. Check temperatures with a refrigerator thermometer or an outdoor thermometer.
- Use foods quickly. Don't depend on maximum storage time.
- Freeze foods in containers or materials designed for freezer storage.
- Keep your freezer clean and at 0 F or lower.

Breads, Pastries, Cakes

| Products | Pantry | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer* at 0 F | Comments |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Unbaked rolls and bread | * | 2 to 3 weeks | 1 month | Longer storage causes yeast to become inactivated and the gluten weakened. |
| Partially baked cinnamon rolls | * | 2 months | * | |
| Baked quick breads | * | 2 months | * | |
| Baked muffins | * | 7 to 10 days | 6 months | |
| Baked breads with no preservatives | * | 2 to 3 weeks | 3 to 5 months | Refrigeration storage is recommended to inhibit mold growth. |
| Doughnuts | 1 to 2 days | 2 days | * | |
| Waffles | * | * | 2 months | |
| Unbaked fruit pies | * | 1 to 2 days | 2 to 4 months | |
| Baked fruit pies | 1 to 2 days | 1 week | 8 months | |
| Pumpkin or chiffon pies | * | 3 to 4 days | 1 to 2 months | |
| Baked cookies | * | * | 8 to 12 months | Cookies will keep two to three weeks in airtight container in the cupboard. Cookies do not need to be refrigerated. |
| Freezer pie shells | * | * | 2 months | If package is open and not used, rewrap and freeze remaining crust and use within two weeks. |
| Cookie dough | * | * | 2 months | |
| Unbaked cakes (batter) | * | * | 1 month | Use double-action baking powder if batter is frozen. |
| Baked cakes | 3 to 7 days | 7 to 10 days | 6 months | |
| Angel cakes | * | | * | 6 to 12 months |
| Fruit cakes | 6 months | 12 months | 12 months | |
| Refrigerated biscuits, rolls, pastries, cookie dough | Expiration date on label | * | | Don't store in the refrigerator door because temperature fluctuation and jarring lower quality. |

* Not recommended

Dairy Products – Real and Substitutes

| Products | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer* at 0 F | Comments |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Butter | 1 to 2 months | 6 to 9 months | Wrap or cover tightly. |
| Margarine | 6 months | 6 to 9 months | Wrap or cover tightly. |
| Buttermilk | 1 to 2 weeks | 3 months | Cover tightly. The flavor is not affected if buttermilk separates; remix before serving. Check the date on the carton; buttermilk will keep several days after that date. |
| Cheese | | | |
| – cottage, ricotta | 1 week | 2 weeks | Keep all cheese tightly packaged in moisture-resistant wrap. If the outside of hard cheese gets slightly moldy, just cut away cheese ½ inch beneath and beside the mold; it won't affect the flavor. If the cheese is covered with heavy mold, discard the entire block. For longer storage, freeze. Freezing will affect the texture and possibly taste. Cream cheese becomes crumbly when frozen; may be used for cooking. Keep refrigerated. Use within one week of the "best when purchased by" date. Refrigerate after opening; see the cupboard storage chart. |
| – cream, Neufchatel | 2 weeks | * | |
| – hard and wax-coated in large pieces, cheddar, Edam, Gouda, Swiss, brick | 6 months | 6 months | |
| • unopened | 3 to 4 weeks | * | |
| • opened | 2 weeks | * | |
| – sliced | 2 weeks | * | |
| – soft cream cheese | 2 weeks | * | |
| – Parmesan | 12 months | * | |
| – Romano-grated (opened) | 3 to 4 weeks | 6 to 8 months | |
| – process (opened) | 3 to 4 weeks | 6 to 8 months | |
| – shredded cheeses | 1 month | 3 to 4 months | Refrigerate slices of processed cheese and cheese food. Refrigerate loaves and jars after opened. Most squeeze packages and aerosol cans don't need refrigeration, but check label. Keep refrigerated. Use within two days of the "best when purchased by" date on the label. |
| Dips | | | |
| – commercial | 2 weeks | * | Keep tightly covered. |
| – homemade | 2 days | * | Keep tightly covered. |
| Milk | | | |
| – evaporated (opened) | 4 to 5 days | * | Keep covered. |
| – homogenized, reconstituted dry nonfat, skimmed | 5 days | * | Keep containers tightly closed. To prevent spoilage, don't return unused milk to original container. |
| – sweetened, condensed (opened) | 4 to 5 days | * | Keep covered. |
| Sour cream | 2 weeks | * | Keep covered. |
| Whipped topping | | | |
| – in aerosol can | 3 months | * | Keep covered. May be refrozen four or five times if thawed in the refrigerator. |
| – prepared from mix | 3 days | * | |
| – in plastic container (eg. Cool Whip) | 2 weeks | 14 months | |
| Yogurt | 1 to 2 weeks | 1 to 2 months | Keep covered and refrigerated. Follow the "use by" date on the package, or up to two weeks after the "sell by" date. Yogurt may separate when frozen. |
| Eggs | | | |
| – in shell | 3 to 5 weeks | * | Store covered. Keep the small end down to center the yolks. Store in a covered container; for longer storage, freeze. |
| – whites or yolks | 2 to 4 days | 1 year | |
| – hard cooked | 1 week | * | |
| Eggs – containing products | | | |
| – custards, custard-filled pastries, cream pies | 3 to 4 days | * | |
| Liquid pasteurized eggs or egg substitutes | | | |
| – opened | 3 days | * | |
| – unopened | 7 days | 1 year | |

* Not recommended

Fruits and Juices

| Products | Pantry | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer* at 0 F | Comments |
|---|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Apples | 3 weeks | 4 to 6 weeks | 8 months | Discard bruised or decayed fruit. Don't wash before storing because moisture encourages spoilage. Store in the crisper or moisture-resistant bag. |
| Apricots | * | 2 to 5 days | * | |
| Avocados | * | 3 to 4 days | * | |
| Bananas | * | 3 days | 2 to 3 months | Refrigerate only when fully ripe. Skin will darken. |
| Berries | * | 2 to 3 days | 8 to 12 months | |
| Canned fruits | * | 2 to 4 days (opened) | 2 to 3 months | |
| Cherries | * | 2 to 3 days | 8 to 12 months | |
| Citrus fruit | 10 days | 10 to 21 days | * | |
| Cranberries | | * | 2 months | 12 months |
| Cranberry cocktail (canned) | * | 1 to 2 weeks (diluted) | * | |
| Guavas | * | 2 to 4 days | * | |
| Juices – canned, bottled or reconstituted | | | | Thaw in the refrigerator. Keep juice tightly covered. Transfer canned juice to a glass or plastic container when opened. Do not store in cans. Keep refrigerated. Do not use after the "used by" date on the carton |
| – pre-mixed, full-strength fruit juice | * | 8 to 12 days (diluted) | 8 months | |
| – lemon juice | 12 to 18 months | 2 months | * | |
| Kiwis | * | 3 to 6 days | * | |
| Mangos | 3 to 5 days | 1 week | 6 to 8 months | Ripen at room temperature. |
| Melons | * | 2 to 4 days | 1 month | Wrap uncut cantaloupe and honeydew to prevent odor spreading to other foods. |
| Nectarines | * | 3 to 5 days | 2 months | |
| Papayas | 3 to 5 days | 1 week | 6 to 8 months | Ripen at room temperature. |
| Peaches | * | 3 to 5 days | 2 months | |
| Pears | * | 3 to 5 days | 2 months | |
| Pineapples | * | 5 to 7 days | 10 to 12 months | |
| Plantains | * | 3 to 5 days | 10 to 12 months | |
| Plums | * | 3 to 5 days | 2 months | |
| Rhubarb | * | 3 to 7 days | * | |
| Frozen juice | | | | |
| – concentrate | * | Do not refrigerate | 1 to 2 years | |
| – reconstituted | * | 6 days | 6 to 12 months | |



For more information about preparing fresh fruits for freezing, see the "Food Freezing Guide" at www.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn403.pdf.

* Not recommended

Fresh Vegetables

Frozen vegetables (in box or bag, without sauce): Keep frozen three to six months. Once prepared, store covered in the refrigerator up to two days.

| Products | Pantry | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer* at 0 F | Comments |
|---|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Artichokes | 1 to 2 days | 1 to 2 weeks | * | Freezes poorly. |
| Asparagus | * | 2 to 4 days | 5 months | |
| Beans – green or wax | * | 3 to 5 days | 8 months | |
| Beets | 1 day | 1 to 2 weeks | 6 to 8 months | |
| Broccoli | * | 3 to 5 days | 10 to 12 months | |
| Brussels sprouts | * | 3 to 5 days | 10 to 12 months | |
| Cabbage | * | 1 to 2 weeks | 10 to 12 months | Keep in the crisper or moisture-resistant wrap. |
| Canned vegetables | * | 3 to 4 days (opened) | * | |
| Carrots | * | 2 to 3 weeks | 10 to 12 months | |
| Cauliflower | * | 3 to 5 days | 10 to 12 months | |
| Celery | * | 1 to 2 weeks | 10 to 12 months | |
| Corn, in husks | * | 1 to 2 days | 8 months | Keep moist. |
| Cucumbers | * | 4 to 6 days | * | |
| Eggplant | 1 day | 4 to 7 days | 6 to 8 months | |
| Frozen vegetables | * | Do not refrigerate | 8 months | |
| Greens | * | 1 to 4 days | 10 to 12 months | |
| Kohlrabi | * | 1 week | 8 to 12 months | |
| Lettuce, head | * | 1 to 2 weeks | * | Store in moisture-resistant wrap, bag or lettuce keeper. Store away from other drained vegetables and fruits to prevent russet spotting. |
| Lima beans | * | 3 to 5 days | 8 months | |
| Mushrooms | * | 3 to 7 days | 10 to 12 months | Do not wash before storing. |
| Onions | 1 month | 2 months | | Keep dry and away from the sun. |
| Okra | 1 day | 2 to 3 days | 10 to 12 months | |
| Parsley | | * | 2 to 3 days | 3 to 4 months |
| Peas | | | | |
| – shelled | * | 3 to 5 days | 8 to 12 months | |
| – unshelled | * | 3 to 5 days | | Keep in the crisper or a moisture-resistant bag. |
| Peppers | * | 4 to 14 days | 6 to 8 months | |
| Potatoes | | | | |
| – white | 1 to 2 weeks | | | For longer storage, keep below 50 F. |
| – sweet | 2 to 3 weeks | | | Don't refrigerate sweet potatoes. |
| Radishes | * | 10 to 14 days | * | Freezes poorly. |
| Shredded cabbage, leaf and bibb lettuce, salad greens | * | 3 to 5 days 2 days after opening | * | Keep in a moisture-resistant wrap or bag. |



* Not recommended

| Products | Pantry | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer* at 0 F | Comments |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Squash | | | | |
| – summer | 1 to 5 days | 4 to 5 days | 10 to 12 months | |
| – winter | 2 to 6 weeks | 1 to 3 months | 10 to 12 months | |
| Tomatillos | * | 1 week | 8 to 12 months | |
| Tomatoes (ripe) | 7 days | * | 2 months | Ripen tomatoes at room temperature away from direct sunlight. |
| Zucchini | * | 1 week | 10 to 12 months | |

For more information about preparing fresh vegetables for freezing, see the “Food Freezing Guide” at www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yff/foods/fn403.pdf.

Fresh Uncooked Meat, Fish, Poultry

| Products | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer at 0 F | Comments |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Red meats | | | |
| – chops | 3 to 5 days | 4 to 12 months | When meat, poultry or fish is bought in plastic wrapping from self-service counters, store in these packages. Meat packages in self-service counters have been handled by many shoppers. Opening these before storing risks contamination. |
| – ground meat | 1 to 2 days | 3 to 4 months | |
| – roasts | 3 to 5 days | 4 to 12 months | |
| – steaks | 3 to 5 days | 4 to 12 months | |
| – stew meat | 3 to 5 days | 4 to 12 months | |
| – bratwurst, precooked | 5 to 7 days | 2 to 3 months | |
| – bratwurst, fresh | 2 to 3 days | 2 to 3 months | |
| – variety meats (liver, heart, etc.) | 1 to 2 days | 3 to 4 months | |
| Poultry | | | |
| – chicken or turkey, whole | 1 to 2 days | 1 year | |
| – chicken or turkey, pieces | 1 to 2 days | 9 months | |
| – duck or goose, whole | 1 to 2 days | 6 months | |
| – giblets | 1 to 2 days | 3 to 4 months | |
| – ground | 1 to 2 days | 3 to 4 months | |

* Not recommended

Fish and Shellfish

| Products | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer at 0 F | Comments |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Fish fillets/steaks | | | |
| – lean | | | These storage guidelines indicate optimal shelf life for seafood products held under proper refrigeration or freezing conditions. Temperature fluctuations in home refrigerators will affect optimal shelf life, as will opening and closing refrigerators and freezers often. |
| • cod, flounder | 1 to 2 days | 6 to 10 months | |
| • haddock, halibut | 1 to 2 days | 6 to 10 months | |
| • pollock, ocean perch | 1 to 2 days | 4 to 8 months | |
| • sea trout, rockfish | 1 to 2 days | 4 to 8 months | |
| • Pacific Ocean perch | 1 to 2 days | 4 to 8 months | |
| – fat | | | |
| • mullet, smelt | 1 to 2 days | 2 to 3 months | |
| • salmon (cleaned) | 1 to 2 days | 2 to 3 months | |
| – shellfish | | | |
| • dungeness crab | 2 to 4 days | 9 to 12 months | |
| • snow crab | 2 to 4 days | 9 to 12 months | |
| • blue crabmeat (fresh) | 1 to 3 days | 2 to 4 months | |
| • blue crabmeat (pasteurized) | 3 to 4 days after opening | 4 to 10 months | |
| • cocktail claws | 2 to 4 days | 9 to 12 months | |
| • king crab | 2 to 4 days | 9 to 12 months | |
| • surimi seafoods | N/A | 9 months | |
| • shrimp | N/A | 12 to 18 months | |
| • oysters, shucked | 3 to 10 days | 3 to 4 months | |
| • clams, shucked | 3 to 10 days | 3 to 4 months | |
| • lobster, live | 1 day | N/A | To determine approximate storage time for those species not listed, ask your retailer which category (lean, fat, shellfish breaded or smoked) they fall within. |
| • lobster, tailmeat | 2 to 3 days | 2 to 4 weeks | |
| – breaded seafoods | | | |
| • shrimp | N/A | 12 months | |
| • scallops | N/A | 16 months | |
| • fish sticks | N/A | 18 months | |
| • portions | N/A | 18 months | |
| – smoked fish | | | |
| • herring | 3 to 4 days | 2 months | |
| • salmon, whitefish | 5 to 8 days | 2 months | |

Wild Game

| Products | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer at 0 F |
|---|----------------------------|----------------|
| Venison | 3 to 5 days | 4 to 12 months |
| Rabbit, squirrel | 2 days | 9 months |
| Wild duck, pheasant, goose (whole) | 1 to 2 days | 6 months |

N/A – not applicable or not advised

Cooked Meat

| Products | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer* at 0 F | Comments |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Meat leftovers | | | |
| – cooked meat and meat dishes | 3 to 4 days | 2 to 3 months | Keep covered. |
| – gravy and meat broth | 3 to 4 days | 6 months | Keep covered. |
| Cooked poultry, leftovers | | | |
| – fried chicken | 3 to 4 days | 4 months | |
| – cooked poultry dishes | 3 to 4 days | 4 to 6 months | |
| – pieces, plain | 3 to 4 days | 2 to 3 month | |
| – pieces covered with broth, gravy | 3 to 4 days | 1 to 2 months | For quick cooking, cool meat and broth separately. Stir broth to prevent the formation of a top coating of fat, which may seal in heat. Ice cubes can be added to concentrated broth to speed cooling. |
| – chicken nuggets, patties | * | 1 to 3 months | |

Cured and Smoked Meats

| Products | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer* at 0 F | Comments |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Bacon | 7 days | 1 month | Keep wrapped. Store in the coldest part of refrigerator or in a meat keeper. Times are for opened packages. Refer to the processor's freshness date on the package for storage times of unopened packages. |
| Bologna, liverwurst | 4 to 6 days | * | |
| Dried beef | 10 to 12 days | * | |
| Hotdogs and lunch meats | | | |
| – hotdogs, opened package | 1 week | 1 to 2 months | |
| – hotdogs, unopened package | 2 weeks | 1 to 2 months | |
| – lunch meats, opened | 3 to 5 days | 1 to 2 months | |
| – lunch meats, unopened | 2 weeks | 1 to 2 months | |
| – 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, jerky sticks | 2 to 3 weeks | 1 to 2 months | |
| Ham, corned beef | | | |
| – corned beef, in pouch with pickling juices | 5 to 7 days | 1 month | Drained, wrapped. |
| – ham, canned (unopened) – label says keep refrigerated | 6 to 9 months | Don't freeze | Store ham in refrigerator unless label indicates refrigeration is not needed. Once canned ham is opened, use within three to five days. |
| – ham, fully cooked, whole | 7 days | 1 to 2 months | |
| – ham, fully cooked, half | 7 days | 1 to 2 months | |
| – ham, fully cooked, slices | 3 to 4 days | 1 to 2 months | |
| – liver sausage | 4 to 6 days | * | |
| – liver sausage | 4 to 6 days | * | |




* Not recommended

Baby Food

| Products | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer at 0 F | Comments |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Liquids | | | |
| – expressed breast milk | 24 hours | 3 to 6 months | For shelf storage of unopened cans of formula, observe the “use by” dates printed on the containers. Store evaporated milk up to 12 months. Heat liquid in hot tap water, not the microwave oven. Shake the bottle before testing the temperature on top of your hand. Discard any unused milk left in a bottle. |
| – formula | 2 days | not recommended | |
| – whole milk | 5 days | 3 months | |
| – reconstituted evaporated milk | 4 to 5 days | not recommended | |
| Solids (opened or freshly made) | | | |
| – strained fruits and vegetables | 2 to 3 days | 6 to 8 months | Observe the “use by” date for shelf storage of unopened jars. Check to see that the safety button in the lid is down. If the jar does not “pop” when opened or is not sealed safely, do not use. Do not heat meats, meat sticks, eggs or jars of food in the microwave. Transfer food from jars to bowls or a heating dish. For 4 ounces of food, microwave on high for 15 seconds; stir and let stand 30 seconds. Stir and test the temperature of the foods before feeding the baby. Don’t feed the baby from the jar. |
| – strained meats and eggs | 1 day | 1 to 2 months | |
| – meat/vegetable combinations | 1 to 2 days | 1 to 2 months | |
| – homemade baby foods | 1 to 2 days | 3 to 4 months | |

Other Foods

| Products | Pantry | Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F | Freezer* at 0 F | Comments |
|--|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Canned goods | | | | Transfer food to glass or plastic containers as soon as they are opened. Do not store in the can. Keep covered. Store all canned food tightly covered. Acidic foods should be tightly covered. Acidic foods should be transferred to glass or plastic containers to avoid metallic taste if stored or more than one or two days. |
| – puddings, custards (opened) | * | 2 days | * | |
| – gravy and broth | 2 to 5 years | 1 to 2 days | * | |
| – meats | 5 years | 3 to 4 days | * | |
| – sauce, tomato-based | * | 3 to 5 days | * | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | |
| – soups, stews | * | 3 to 4 days | 2 to 3 months | |
| – sandwiches | * | 2 to 3 days | 1 month | |
| – casseroles | * | 3 to 4 days | 1 month | |
| – leftover cooked food | * | see other charts | * | |
| – ground spices | 2 to 3 years | * | * | |
| – candies | * | not necessary | 3 to 6 months | |
| – TV dinners, frozen casseroles | * | * | 3 months | Keep frozen until ready to serve. (Best if used in three months; may be frozen up to 12 months.) |
| Deli and vacuum-packed products | | | | |
| – store-prepared (or homemade) egg, chicken, tuna, ham, macaroni salads | * | 3 to 4 days | * |  |
| – pre-stuffed pork and lamb chops, chicken breasts stuffed with dressing | * | 1 to 2 days | 9 months | |
| – store-cooked convenience meals | * | 1 to 2 days | * | |
| – commercial brand vacuum-packed dinners with USDA seal, unopened | * | 2 weeks | * | |
| – freezer microwave popcorn | * | * | 12 to 18 months | |

* Not recommended

Mixes and Packaged Foods

| Food | Storage | Handling Hints |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Biscuit, brownie, muffin mix | 9 months | Keep cool and dry. |
| Cakes | | |
| – purchased | 1 to 2 days | Refrigerate if cakes have buttercream, whipped cream or custard frostings or fillings. |
| • pantry | 3 to 7 days | Keep cool and dry. |
| • refrigerated | 7 to 10 days | |
| • frozen | 6 months | |
| – mixes | 12 to 18 months | |
| – angel food | 12 months | |
| Casserole mix | | |
| – complete or add own meat | 9 to 12 months | Keep cool and dry; after preparation, store as casserole. |
| Cookies | | |
| – homemade | 2 to 3 weeks | Put in an airtight container. |
| – packaged | 2 months | Keep the box tightly closed. |
| Crackers | | Keep the box tightly closed. |
| – unopened | 8 months | |
| – opened | 1 month | |
| Entrees | 18 months | Store in a cool, dry place in the original container. Do not store in a closed container that stops air circulation around the package. |
| Frosting | | |
| – unopened | 10 to 12 months | Store leftovers in the refrigerator. |
| – opened (refrigerator) | 2 to 3 weeks | |
| Hot roll mix | 18 months | If opened, put in an airtight container. |
| Pancake mixes | 9 months | Keep in an airtight package. |
| Pie crust mix | 8 months | Keep cool and dry. |
| Cream pies | 3 to 4 days | Refrigerate whipped cream, custard and chiffon fillings. |
| Fruit pies | 1 to 2 days | |
| Potatoes | | |
| – instant mix | 6 to 12 months | Keep in an airtight package. |
| Powdered drink mixes | | |
| – unopened | 18 to 24 months | |
| – opened | 1 to 3 months | |
| Pudding mixes | | Keep cool and dry. |
| – unopened | 12 months | |
| – opened | 3 to 4 months | |
| Rice mixes | 6 months | Keep cool and dry. |
| Sauce and gravy mixes | 2 years | Keep cool and dry. |
| Soup mixes | 12 months | Check the package date; keep cool and dry. |
| Toaster pastries | 6 to 12 months | Keep in an airtight package. |

Canned and Dried Foods

| Food | Storage | Handling Hints |
|--|--|---|
| Canned food – plastic cans | 6 to 12 months | Possibly longer, depending on ingredients. |
| Canned fruit juices | 12 to 18 months | Keep cool. |
| Juice/drink boxes – unopened – opened | 9 months 7 to 12 days | Follow the “best used by” date on the label. |
| Canned foods – unopened – opened | 12 to 18 months | Keep cool. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • baby foods • fish and seafood • fruit • meats • pickles, olives • poultry • tomato sauce • vegetables | 2 days 3 to 4 days 5 to 7 days 3 to 4 days 1 to 3 months 3 to 4 days 5 to 7 days 2 days | Close jar tightly and refrigerate. For all opened canned foods, transfer foods in cans to glass or plastic storage containers. Tightly cover and refrigerate. If left in the opened can, off flavors of some foods may develop. |
| Fruits (dried) – unopened – opened (pantry) – opened (refrigerator) | 6 months 1 months 6 months | Keep cool in airtight containers; refrigerate if possible. |
| Vegetables – dried – dehydrated flakes | 1 year 6 months | Keep cool in an airtight container; refrigerate if possible. |

Spices, Herbs, Condiments, Extracts

| Food | Storage | Handling Hints |
|--|--|---|
| Ketchup, chili sauce – unopened – opened | 12 months 6 month | Refrigerate for longer storage. |
| Mustard, prepared yellow – unopened – opened | 1 to 2 years 1 year | May be refrigerated; stir before using. |
| Spices and herbs – whole – ground – herb/spice blends – herbs | 3 to 4 years 2 to 3 years 6 months 6 months | Store in airtight containers in dry places away from sunlight and heat. At times listed, check aroma; if faded, replace. Whole cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon sticks maintain quality beyond the two-year period; can be stored in the freezer to extend shelf life. |
| Vanilla – unopened – opened | 2 years 12 months | Keep tightly closed; volatile oils escape. |
| Other extracts – opened | 12 months | Keep tightly closed; volatile oils escape. |
| Soy sauce (unopened) | 3 years | Use within 1 month after opening. |
| Tabasco, worchestershire | 1 year | Refrigerate after opening. |

Miscellaneous Foods

| Food | Storage | Handlings Hints |
|--|---|--|
| Cheese, Parmesan (grated) – unopened – opened | 10 months 2 months | Refrigerate after opening; keep tightly closed. |
| Coconut – shredded, canned or packaged • unopened • opened | 12 months 8 months | Refrigerate after opening. |
| Meat substitutes – textured protein products (imitation bacon bits, etc.) | 1 year | Keep tightly covered; for longer storage, refrigerate. |
| Metered caloric products, powdered breakfast mixes, liquid breakfast formulas | 6 months | Keep in the can, closed jar or original packets. |
| Nuts – in shell, unopened – nutmeats, packaged • vacuum can, unopened • other packaging, unopened • package or can, opened | 4 months 1 year 3 months 4 to 6 months, refrigerated | Refrigerate after opening; freeze for longer storage. Unsalted and blanched nuts keep longer than salted. |
| Peanut butter – unopened – opened | 6 to 24 months 2 to 3 months | Refrigeration not needed; keeps longer if refrigerated. Natural peanut butter must be refrigerated after opening. |
| Peas, beans (dried) | 12 months | Store in an airtight container. |
| Popcorn | 2 years | Store in an airtight container. |
| Microwave popcorn | 6 to 12 months | |
| Soft drinks | 6 months | |
| Whipped topping (dry) | 12 months | Keep cool and dry. |
| Yeast (dry) – pantry – refrigerated (open) – frozen | | 2 years 4 months 6 months |



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