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Food Storage Guide

Answers the Question . . .

How long can I store

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

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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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened (pantry) – opened (refrigerator) 	1 to 2 years 6 to 12 months 1 year	Keep tightly covered.
Cornstarch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened 	18 to 24 months 18 months	Keep tightly covered.
Flour (White) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened (pantry) – opened (refrigerator) 	6 to 12 months 6 to 8 months 1 year	Can be frozen for indefinite storage. Keep in an airtight container.
Flour (Whole Wheat) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened (refrigerator) 	3 to 6 months 6 to 8 months	Keep in an airtight container.
Gelatin (all types) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened 	6 to 18 months 6 to 12 months	Cover tightly; refrigerate after opening.
Molasses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened 	1 to 2 years 6 months	Keep tightly covered. Refrigerate to extend storage life.
Marshmallow cream <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened 	2 to 5 months 1 month	Cover tightly. Serve at room temperature.
Marshmallows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened 	1 year 1 month	Keep in an airtight container.
Mayonnaise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unopened – opened (refrigerator) 	3 to 6 months 2 months	Check the package date; refrigerate after opening.
Milk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – condensed or evaporated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unopened • opened (refrigerated) – nonfat dry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unopened • opened 	12 months 4 to 5 days 3 months 3 months	Refrigerate after opening. Store in an airtight container.
Pasta <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – spaghetti, macaroni, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unopened • opened – egg noodles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unopened • opened 	2 years 1 year 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 (refrigerator)	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 (refrigerator)	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 (refrigerator)	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			
• unopened	6 months	6 months	
• opened	3 to 4 weeks	*	
– sliced	2 weeks	*	
– soft cream cheese	2 weeks	*	
– Parmesan	12 months	*	
– Romano-grated (opened)			
– 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.
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			
– unopened	3 days	*	
– opened	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 <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/food-freezing-guide>.

* 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.



For more information about preparing fresh vegetables for freezing, see the “Food Freezing Guide” at <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/food-freezing-guide>.

* Not recommended

Products	Pantry	Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F	Freezer* at 0 F	Comments
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.
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 temperatures from directed sunlight
Zucchini	*	1 week	10 to 12 months	

For more information about preparing fresh vegetables for freezing, see the “Food Freezing Guide” at <https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/food-freezing-guide>.

* Not recommended

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	

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			Although these storage times ensure a fresh product for maximum refrigeration storage life at 32 F, the consumer should plan on using seafood within 36 hours for optimal quality and freshness of product.
• 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	
• lobster, tailmeat	2 to 3 days	2 to 4 weeks	
Breaded Seafoods			To determine approximate storage time for those species not listed, ask your retailer which category (lean, fat, shellfish breaded or smoked) they fall within.
• 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	

N/A – not applicable or not advised

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

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	

* Not recommended

Cured and Smoked Meats

Products	Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F	Freezer* at 0 F	Comments
Bacon	7 days	1 month	
Bologna, liverwurst	4 to 6 days	*	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.
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	*	


* 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 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	Keep frozen until ready to serve. (Best if used in three months; may be frozen up to 12 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	
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				



* 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		
– unopened	8 months	Keep the box tightly closed.
– 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		
– unopened	12 months	Keep cool and dry.
– 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 • baby foods • fish and seafood • fruit • meats • pickles, olives • poultry • tomato sauce • vegetables	12 to 18 months 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	Keep cool. 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 (imitation1 year bacon bits, etc.)		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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