FN717 (Reviewed Oct. 2026)

Keep Food Safe from Store to Storage

Shopping Food Safety Facts

Plan your trip around the grocery store, and make it the last stop before going home. Use a shopping list. Shop for nonperishable foods first, followed by frozen and refrigerated items such as meats, fish, eggs, dairy products and deli meats.

Avoid "cross-cart contamination." Separate meat, fish and poultry products from other foods by placing them in plastic bags and in a separate part of your cart so juices won't leak and cross-contaminate other foods.

Separate nonfood items such as cleaning and hygiene supplies from food in your cart.

Buy food in good condition. Cold foods should be cold to the touch and frozen foods should be solidly frozen.

Prevent Foodborne Illness Every Step of the Way from Store to Storage

- **Separate.** Don't cross-contaminate.
- **Chill.** Refrigerate promptly.
- **Clean.** Wash your hands before handling any food. Keep refrigerators and food preparation surfaces clean.

Grocery List

Shop for food last — get it home fast!



Dry Facts about Food Storage

- Place the date on food packages when you buy them. Place the new purchases behind the old on the shelf and use the old first. **Remember FIFO ("first in, first out").** Use the oldest dated packages first.
- Read labels to determine how foods should be stored. Foods stored for longer than recommended times or beyond the date on the package may change quality, color or flavor.
- Store canned goods in a cool, clean, dry place.
- Buy fresh looking packages. Dusty cans or torn labels can indicate old stock. Don't buy canned goods with bulges, rust or sharp dents. Buy only what you can expect to use. Canned foods have a relatively long shelf life, but buy only what you expect to use within the product date.

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Cold Facts about Transporting Your Food

- Take food straight home after grocery shopping.
- Use coolers or insulated bags if travel time from store to home will be longer than one hour. Put the groceries in the air-conditioned part of the car when it is hot outside.
- When you get home, immediately refrigerate or freeze perishable items.
- Check the temperature of your refrigerator and freezer before you put your groceries away. The refrigerator temperature should be 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower and the freezer should be 0 degrees or lower.

Cold Facts about Refrigerator and Freezer Food Storage

- Use foil, plastic wrap, plastic bags or airtight containers designed for food to package foods for refrigerator storage. Moisture- and vapor-proof materials are best.
- Store foods at cool refrigerator temperatures of 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower. Use a refrigerator thermometer to be certain.
- Keep freezer at 0 degrees Fahrenheit or lower for best food quality, and don't overstuff. Allow room for air to circulate.
- Store securely wrapped meat in the meat compartment or the coldest part of the refrigerator.
- Prevent cross-contamination. Place meat on shelves UNDER ready-to-eat foods such as produce.

What about food product dates? What do they mean?

Pay attention to the food product dates on the foods you want to buy in the store:

"Sell" or **"pull"** date is used on foods like milk and other dairy products, eggs and packaged meats. Grocery stores use these dates to decide how long to keep food products on the shelf. Products are still safe to eat three to seven days after the sell-by date.

"Best if used by" is a manufacturer's date. The consumer should use the product by the date for best quality and flavor.

"Expiration" date is used on infant formulas, yeast, cake mixes and baking powder. The product should be discarded when past its expiration date. (Purchase the product with the most distant expiration date.)

Germs thrive at room temperature and can easily move from place to place.

Remember to clean, separate, cook and chill!

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For more information on nutrition and food safety, visit the NDSU Extension website:
www.ag.ndsu.edu/food

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North Dakota State University is an equal opportunity educator and employer. This work is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Requests for accommodations related to disability may be made at 701-231-1865.

web-6-21, web-10-21