



Keeping Food Safe

Food Storage Times for the Home

Proper storage keeps foods tasting fresh longer. It also slows down the growth of bacteria that makes food spoil or become unsafe to eat. This chart shows the maximum amount of time foods will be fresh and safe to eat. The time foods can be stored depends on:

- ✓ how fresh the food was at the grocery store.
- ✓ the temperature of the refrigerator or freezer.
- ✓ how well the food was wrapped or covered.

Colder temperatures keep foods fresh and safe longer. Freezers that are part of a refrigerator are not as cold as separate freezer units. Therefore, frozen foods last longer when stored in separate freezer units.

Food	Refrigerator (40°F)	Freezer (0-10°F)
Eggs, fresh, in shell	4-5 weeks	Do not freeze
raw yolks, whites	2-4 days	1 year
Hard cooked	1 week	Do not freeze
Liquid pasteurized eggs or egg substitutes, unopened.	10 days	1 year
Mayonnaise, commercial (refrigerate after opening)	2 months	Do not freeze
TV dinners, frozen casseroles	---	3-4 months
Fresh meat (tightly wrapped)		
Ground meat (beef, chicken, turkey, pork, lamb, veal) and stew meats	1-2 days	3-4 months
Steaks, roasts and chops:		
beef	3 days	6-12 months
lamb	3 days	6-9 months
pork or veal	3 days	4-6 months

Food	Refrigerator (40°F)	Freezer (0-10°F)
Fresh poultry (tightly wrapped)		
Whole chicken or turkey	1-2 days	1 year
Chicken or turkey pieces	1-2 days	9 months
Fresh fish, gutted	1-2 days	3-6 months
Hot dogs, unopened package	2 weeks	1-2 months
Lunch meats, unopened package	2 weeks	1-2 months
Bacon (tightly wrapped)	7 days	1 month
Sausage, raw from pork, beef or turkey	1-2 days	1-2 months
Smoked breakfast links, patties	7 days	1-2 months
Hard sausage-pepperoni, jerky sticks	2-3 weeks	1-2 months
Corned beef in pouch with pickling juices	5-7 days	1 month (drained and wrapped)
Ham, canned, label says keep refrigerated, unopened	6-9 months	Do not freeze
Ham, fully cooked-whole	7 days	1-2 months
Ham, fully cooked-half or slices	3-5 days	1-2 months
Dairy Products		
Milk-whole, low fat or skim	7 days	3 months
Reconstituted evaporated or opened condensed milk	4-5 days	Do not freeze
Reconstituted dry milk	4-5 days	Do not freeze
Cream	1-2 weeks	2 months
Buttermilk	1-2 weeks	3 months
Butter	1-3 months	6-9 months
Cheese		
Hard	3-4 weeks	6 months
Cottage cheese	1 week	Does not freeze well
Cream cheese	2 weeks	Does not freeze well
Processed cheese	1 month	4-6 months
Sour cream	1-3 weeks	Do not freeze
Yogurt	1-2 weeks	1-2 months
Ice Cream	---	2-3 weeks
Expressed breast milk	1 day	3-4 months
Infant formula	2 days	Do not freeze

Adapted from the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension bulletin, "Food Storage" and USDA-FSIS, *Cooking for Groups - A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety*, 2001.

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