

Keeping Food Safe

Storing Leftovers Safely

Store leftovers properly to keep them safe. Store leftovers in clean, covered containers. Store a large amount of leftovers in several small shallow containers instead of one large container.

This chart shows the maximum amount of time leftovers should be kept in the refrigerator or freezer. The time leftovers can be kept safely depends on:

- ✓ whether or not the food was handled safely during preparation.
- ✓ how fast the food cooled down to refrigerator or freezer temperature.
- ✓ the temperature of the refrigerator or freezer.

Once leftovers are reheated, they should not be stored again. Throw away any reheated leftovers that are not eaten.

Food	Refrigerator (40°F)	Freezer (0-10°F)
Eggs, liquid pasteurized or egg substitutes, opened	3 days	Do not freeze
Deli and vacuum-packed products: Store-prepared (or homemade) egg, chicken, tuna, ham or macaroni salads	3-5 days	These products do not freeze well
Pre-stuffed pork and lamb chops, chicken breasts stuffed with dressing	1 day	
Cooked meat and meat dishes	3-4 days	2-3 months
Soups and stews, gravy and meat broth	1-2 days	2-3 months

Food	Refrigerator (40°F)	Freezer (0-10°F)
Cooked poultry, poultry dishes	1-2 days	4 months
Chicken nuggets, patties	1-2 days	1-3 months
Cooked fish	3-4 days	4-6 months
Hot dogs, opened package	1 week	1-2 months (wrapped)
Lunch meats, opened package	3-5 days	1-2 months (wrapped)
Baby food		
Strained fruits or vegetables*	1-2 days	6-8 months
Strained meats and egg yolks*	1 day	1-2 months
Meat and vegetable combinations*	1-2 days	3-4 months

* These storage times are for opened jars or homemade baby food. Follow the "use-by" date for shelf storage of unopened jars.

Adapted from the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension bulletin, "Food Storage"

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