

FOOD STORAGE AND EXPIRATION DATES



SHELF-STABLE FOODS

Before opening, shelf-stable foods should be safe unless the can or packaging has been damaged. After opening, store products in tightly closed containers. The storage of many shelf-stable items at room temperature is a quality issue -- unless the product is contaminated (bugs in flour, for example). Some foods must be refrigerated after opening, such as tuna or chili.

BABY FOODS, JARS AND CANS			
SHELF-STABLE FOODS	UNOPENED, ON SHELF	OPENED, REFRIGERATED	OPENED, ON SHELF
Fruits and Vegetables	2 months after date	2 - 3 days	
Meats and eggs	2 months after date	1 day	
Cereal, dry mixes	Use-by date		4 months
Formula	Use-by date	1-2 days	
Bacon bits, imitation	4 months		4 months
Milk, canned evaporated	12 months	4-5 days	

DRY PANTRY ITEMS			
SHELF-STABLE FOODS	UNOPENED, ON SHELF	OPENED, REFRIGERATED	OPENED, ON SHELF
Beans, dried	12 months		12 months
Canned goods, low acids (meat, poultry, fish, gravy, stews, soups, beans, carrots, corn, pasta, peas, potatoes, spinach)	2-5 years	3-4 days	
Canned goods, high acid (juices, fruits, pickles, sauerkraut, tomato, soups and foods in vinegar based sauce)	12-18 months	5 - 7 days	
Cereal, ready-to-eat	6-12 months		3 months
Oats	12 months		6-12 months
Chocolate, unsweetened, semi-sweet, solid	18-24 months		12 months
Chocolate syrup	2 years	6 months	
Cocoa and cocoa mixes	Indefinitely		12 months
Diet powder mixes	6 months		3 months
Lentils, dried	12 months		12 months
Nuts, jars or cans	12 months	4-6 months, 9-12 months frozen	
Pasta, dry, made without eggs	2 years		12 months
Dry egg noodles	2 years		1-2 months
Peanut butter, commercial	6-9 months		2-3 months
Cookies, packaged	2 months	8-12 months frozen	4 weeks
Crackers	8 months	3-4 months	1 month

DRY PANTRY ITEMS			
SHELF-STABLE FOODS	UNOPENED, ON SHELF	OPENED, REFRIGERATED	OPENED, ON SHELF
Fruits, dried	6 months	6 months	
Peas, dried split	12 months		12 months
Popcorn, dry kernels in jar	2 years		12 months
Popcorn, commercially popped in bags	2-3 months		1-2 weeks
Popcorn, microwave packets	12 months		1-2 days popped
Potato chips	2 months		1-2 weeks
Potatoes, instant	6-12 months		6-12 months
Pudding mixes	12 months		3-4 months
Rice, white or wild	2 years		12 months
Brown rice	12 months	6 months	
Cream sauces with milk solids	12 months		
Diet sodas, bottles and cans	8 months		3 months
Shortening, solid	3 months after date	2-3 days	
Regular sodas, bottles	3 months after date	2-3 days	
Regular sodas, cans	9 months after date		
Soup mixes	12 months		Use entire amount
Juices, boxes	4-6 months	8-12 days	1-2 months

COFFEE			
SHELF-STABLE FOODS	UNOPENED, ON SHELF	OPENED, REFRIGERATED	OPENED, ON SHELF
Whole beans, non-vacuum bag	1-3 weeks	3-4 months frozen	
Ground, in cans	2 years	2 weeks	
Instant, jars and tins	12 months		2-3 months
CONDIMENTS			
Barbecue sauce, bottled	12 months	4 months	1 month
Catsup, tomato; cocktail sauce or chili sauce	12 months	6 months	1 month
Chutney	12 months	1-2 months	
Horseradish, in jar	12 months	3-4 months	
Mayonnaise, commercial	2-3 months	2 months	
Mustard	12 months	1 year	1-2 months
Olives, black and green	12-18 months	2 weeks	
Pickles	12 months	1-2 months	
Salad dressings, commercial, bottled	10-12 months	3 months	
Salsa, picante and taco sauces	12 months	1 month	
Garlic, chopped, commercial jars	18 months	Use-by date	
Gravy, jars & cans	2-5 years	1-2 days	
Dry gravy mixes	2 years	6 months	

CONDIMENTS

SHELF-STABLE FOODS	UNOPENED, ON SHELF	OPENED, REFRIGERATED	OPENED, ON SHELF
Herbs, dried	1-2 years		Store in cool dark place - 1 year
Mayple syrup, pure	12 months	12 months	
Mushrooms, dried	6 months		3 months
Spices, whole	2-4 years		
Spices, ground	2-3 years		
Paprika, red pepper, chili powder	2 years	Store in refrigerator	
Flavored or herb mixes	6 months		Use entire amount
Sauce mixes, non-dairy (spaghetti, taco, etc)	2 years		Use entire amount
Olive or vegetable oils	6 months		4-6 months
Walnuts, macademia and nut oils	6 months	4 months	
Vegetable oil sprays	2 years		12 months
Loose/instant tea	2 years		6-12 months
Toaster pastries, fruit filled	6 months		Keep foil packets sealed
Toaster pastries, non-fruit filling	9 months		
Tomatoes, sun dried, packed in oil	12 months	6-12 months	
Tomatoes, sundried, packed in cellophane	9 months		3-6 months
Vinegar	2 years		12 months
Yeast, dry, packets and jars	Use-by date	Refrigerate open jars	
Water, bottled	1-2 years		3 months
Worcestershire sauce	12 months		12 months

FROZEN FOODS



When shopping, place frozen foods in the cart last, immediately before checking out. Take the foods directly home and place in freezer. For storage of meat and poultry purchased frozen, see refrigerated foods chart.

FROZEN ITEM	FREEZER	REFRIGERATOR, AFTER THAWING
Bagels	2 months	2 months
Bread dough, commercial	Use-by date	After baking, 4-7 days
Burritos, sandwiches	2 months	3-4 days
Egg substitutes	12 months	Date on carton
Fish, breaded	3 months	Do not defrost. Cook frozen
Fish , raw	6 months	1-2 days
Fruits such as berries, melons	4-6 months	4-5 days
Guacamole	3-4 months	3-4 days
Ice cream	2-4 months	
Juice concentrates	6-12 months	7-10 days
Lobster tails	3 months	2 days
Pancake, waffles	2 months	3-4 days
Sausages, uncooked	1-2 months	1-2 days
Sausages, precooked	1-2 months	7 days
Sherbet, sorbet	2-4 months	
Shrimp, shellfish	12 months	1-2 days
Dinners, entrees, breakfast	3 months	Do not defrost. Cook frozen
Vegetables	8 months	3-4 days

REFRIGERATED FOODS



Refrigerate foods to maintain quality as well as to keep them safe. Some bacteria grow and multiply -- although very slowly -- at refrigerated temperatures. There is a limit to the time various foods will stay fresh and safe in a refrigerator. Food kept continuously frozen at 0° F will always be safe but the quality suffers with lengthy freezer storage.

PRODUCT	REFRIGERATED	FROZEN
Beverages, fruit	3 weeks unopened	
Juice in cartons, fruit drinks, punch	7-10 days open	8-12 months
Pesto, salsa	Use-by date, 3 days after opening	1-2 months
Sour cream-based dip	2 weeks	Doesn't freeze well

DAIRY PRODUCTS

Butter	1-3 months	6-9 months
Buttermilk	7-14 days	3 months
Cheese, hard (Cheddar, Swiss)	6 months unopened, 3-4 weeks opened	6 months
Cheese, soft (Brie, Bel Paese)	1 week	6 months
Cottage cheese, Ricotta	1 week	Doesn't freeze well
Cream cheese	2 weeks	Doesn't freeze well
Cream whipping, ultrapasteurized	1 month	Do not freeze
Cream, whipped, sweetened	1 day	1-2 months
Aerosol can, real whipped cream	3-4 weeks	Do not freeze

DAIRY PRODUCTS

PRODUCT	REFRIGERATED	FROZEN
Aerosol can, non-dairy topping	3 months	Do not freeze
Cream, Half and Half	3-4 days	4 months
Egg substitutes, liquid, unopened	10 days	Do not freeze
Egg substitutes, liquid, opened	3 days	Do not freeze
Eggnog, commercial	3-5 days	6 months
Eggs, in shell	3-5 weeks	Do not freeze
Raw egg whites	2-4 days	12 months
Raw egg yolks	2-4 days	Doesn't freeze well
Eggs, hard cooked	1 week	Doesn't freeze well
Margarine	4-5 months	12 months
Milk	7 days	3 months
Pudding	Use-by date, 2 days after opening	Do not freeze
Sour cream	7-21 days	Doesn't freeze well
Yogurt	7-14 days	1-2 months

DELI FOODS

Entrees, cold or hot	3-4 days	2-3 months
Store-sliced lunch meats	3-5 days	1-2 months
Salads	3-5 days	Do not freeze

DOUGH

PRODUCT

REFRIGERATED

FROZEN

Tube cans of biscuits, rolls, pizza dough

Use-by date

Do not freeze

Ready-to-bake pie crust

Use-by date

2 months

Cookie dough

Use by date, unopened or opened

2 months

FISH

Lean fish (cod, flounder, haddock, sole, etc)

1-2 days

6 months

Fatty fish (bluefish, mackeral, salmon, etc)

1-2 days

2-3 months

Caviar, non-pasteurized (fresh)

6 months unopened, 2 days if opened

Do not freeze

Caviar, pasteurized, vaccum-packaged

1 year unopened, 2 days if opened

Do not freeze

Cooked fish

3-4 days

4-6 months

Smoked fish

Use-by date or 14 days

2 months in vacuum pkg

SHELLFISH

Shrimp, scallops, crayfish, squid

1-2 days

3-6 months

Shucked clams, mussels and oysters

1-2 days

3-6 months

Live clams, mussels, crab, lobster and oysters

2-3 days

2-3 months

Cooked shellfish

3-4 days

3 months

MEAT, FRESH

PRODUCT	REFRIGERATED	FROZEN
Beef, lamb, pork or veal chops, steaks, roasts	3-5 days	4-12 months
Ground meat	1-2 days	3-4 months
Variety meats (liver, tongue, chitterlings, etc)	1-2 days	3-4 months
Cooked meats (home-made)	3-4 days	2-3 months

MEAT, SMOKED OR PROCESSED

Bacon	7 days	1 month
Corned beef, in pouch with pickling juices	5-7 days	1 month
Ham, canned ("keep refrigerated" label)	6-9 months	Not in can
Ham, fully cooked, whole	7 days	1-2 months
Ham, fully cooked, slices or halves	3-4 days	1-2 months
Ham, cooked before eating	7 days	1-2 months
Hot dogs, sealed in package	2 weeks	1-2 months
Hot dogs, after opening	1 week	1-2 months
Lunch meats, sealed in package	2 weeks	1-2 months
Lunch meats, after opening	3-5 days	1-2 months
Sausage, raw, bulk type	1-2 days	1-2 months
Sausage, smoked links, patties	7 days	1-2 months
Sausage, hard, dry (pepperoni), sliced	2-3 weeks	1-2 months
Pasta, fresh	Use-by date, 1-2 days	2 months

POULTRY, FRESH

PRODUCT	REFRIGERATED	FROZEN
Chicken or turkey, whole	1-2 days	12 months
Chicken or turkey, parts	1-2 days	9 months
Duckling or goose, whole	1-2 days	6 months
Giblets	1-2 days	3-4 months

POULTRY, COOKED OR PROCESSED

Chicken nuggets, patties	1-2 days	1-3 months
Cooked poultry dishes	3-4 days	4-6 months
Fried chicken	3-4 days	4 months
Ground turkey or chicken	1-2 days	3-4 months
Lunch meats, sealed in package	2 weeks	1-2 months
Lunch meats, after opening	3-5 days	1-2 months
Pieces covered with broth or gravy	1-2 days	6 months
Rotisserie chicken	3-4 days	4 months

PRODUCE



Raw fruits are safe at room temperature, but after ripening, will mold and rot quickly. For best quality, store ripe fruit in the refrigerator or prepare and freeze.

FRUITS			
PRODUCE	SHELF	REFRIGERATOR	FREEZER
Apples	1-2 days	3 weeks	Cooked, 8 months
Apricots	Until ripe	2-3 days	
Avocados	Until ripe	3-4 days	
Bananas	Until ripe	2 days, skin will blacken	Peele, 1 month
Berries, cherries		1-2 days	4 months
Citrus fruit	10 days	1-2 weeks	
Coconuts, fruits	1 week	2-3 weeks	Shredded, 6 months
Grapes	1 day	1 week	Whole, 1 month
Kiwi fruit	Until ripe	3-4 days	
Melons	1-2 days	3-4 days	1 month
Papaya, mango	3-5 days	1 week	
Peaches, nectarines	Until ripe	3-4 days	Sliced, lemon juice, 2 months
Pears, plums	3-5 days	3-4 days	

VEGETABLES			
PRODUCE	SHELF	RAW, REFRIGERATED	COOKED AND FROZEN
Cabbage	No	1-2 weeks	10-12 months
Carrots, parsnips	No	2 weeks	10-12 months
Celery	No		10-12 months
Cucumbers	No	4-5 days	
Eggplant	1 day	3-4 days	6-8 months
Garlic, ginger root	2 days	1-2 weeks	1 month
Greens	No	1-2 days	10-12 months
Herbs, fresh	No	7-10 days	1-2 months
Leeks	No	1-2 weeks	10-12 months
Lettuce, iceberg	No	1-2 weeks	No
Lettuce, leaf	No	3-7 days	
Mushrooms	No	2-3 days	10-12 months
Okra	No	2-3 days	10-12 months
Onions, dry	2-3 weeks	2 months	10-12 months
Spring or green onions	No	1-2 weeks	
Peppers, bell or chili	No	4-5 days	6-8 months
Potatoes	1-2 months	1-2 weeks	Mashed, 10-12 months
Rutabagas	1 week	2 weeks	8-10 months
Spinach	No	1-2 days	10-12 month
Squash, summer	No	4-5 days	10-12 months
Squash, winter	1 week	2 weeks	
Turnips	No	2 weeks	8-10 months
Tomatoes	Until ripe	2-3 days	2 months

BAKERY ITEMS



Bakery items containing custards, meat or vegetables, and frostings made of cream cheese, whipped cream or eggs must be kept refrigerated. Bread products not containing these ingredients are safe at room temperature, but eventually they will mold and become unsafe to eat.

PRODUCT	SHELF	REFRIGERATOR	FREEZER
Bread, commercial	2-4 days	7-14 days	3 months
Bread, flat (tortillas, pita)	2-4 days	4-7 days	4 months
Cakes, Angel Food*	1-2 days	7 days	2 months
Chiffon, sponge	1-2 days	7 days	2 months
Chocolate	1-2 days	7 days	4 months
Fruit cake	1 month	6 months	12 months
Made from mix	3-4 days	7 days	4 months
Pound cake	3-4 day	7 days	6 months
Cheesecake	No	7 days	2-3 months
Cookies, bakery or homemade	2-3 weeks	2 months	8-12 months
Croissants, butter	1 day	7 days	2 months
Doughnuts, glazed or cake	1-2 days	7 days	1 month
Dairy, cream filled	No	3-4 days	No
Muffins	No	3-4 days	No
Pastries, Danish	1-2 days	7 days	2 months
Pies, cream	No	3-4 days	2 months
Pies, chiffon	No	1-2 days	No

PRODUCT	SHELF	REFRIGERATOR	FREEZER
Pies, fruit	1-2 days	7 days	No
Pies, mincemeat	1-2 days	7 days	8 months
Pies, pecan	2 hours	3-4 days	8 months
Pies, pumpkin	2 hours	3-4 days	1-2 months
Quiche	3-4 days	7 days	1-2 months
Rolls, yeast, baked	Use-by date	7 days	2 months
Rolls, filled, meat or vegetables	2 hours	3-4 days	2 months
BAKING INGREDIENTS			
SHELF-STABLE FOODS	UNOPENED, ON SHELF	OPENED, REFRIGERATED	OPENED, ON SHELF
Baking powder	6 months		3 months
Baking soda	18 months		6 months
Biscuit or pancake mix	15 months		Use-by date
Cake, brownie and bread mixes	12-18 months		Use-by date
Cornmeal, regular degerminated	6-12 months	12 months	4 months
Cornstarch	18 months		18 months
Flour, white	6-12 months		6-8 months
Flour, whole wheat	1 month	6-8 months	
Frosting, canned	10 months	1 week	
Frosting mixes	12 months		3 months
Gelatin, flavored	18 months		Use all or reseal for 3-4 months
Gelatin, unflavored	3 years		Use all or reseal for 3-4 months

BAKING INGREDIENTS			
SHELF-STABLE FOODS	UNOPENED, ON SHELF	OPENED, REFRIGERATED	OPENED, ON SHELF
Jams, jellies, preserves	12 months	6 months	
Molasses	12 months		6 months
Extracts, vanilla, lemon, etc	3 years		1 year
Marshmallows, marshmallow creme	2-4 months		1 month
Sugar, brown	4 months		Sugar never spoils
Sugar, granulated	2 years		
Confectioners	18 months		
Sugar substitutes	2 years		
Syrup, pancake, maple & other	12 months		12 months
Tapioca	12 months		12 months