

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 these factors, there are 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, like 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. 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.**

Fruits and Juices

PRODUCTS	Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F	Freezer at 0 F	COMMENTS
Apples	1 month	8 to 12 months	Discard bruised or decayed fruit. Don't wash before storing because moisture encourages spoilage. Store in the crisper or moisture-resistant bag or wrap.
Apricots	3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	
Avocados	5 days	8 to 12 months	
Bananas			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	2 weeks	4 to 6 months	
Cranberries	1 week	8 to 12 months	
Cranberry cocktail (canned)	5 to 6 days (diluted)	3 to 6 months	
Guavas	1 to 2 days	8 to 12 months	
Juices – canned, bottled or reconstituted			Thaw in the refrigerator. Keep fruit 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	6 days (diluted)	8 months	
– Real Lemon Juice	12 months		
Kiwis	6 to 8 days	4 to 6 months	
Mangos	Ripen at room temperature	8 to 12 months	
Melons	5 days	8 to 12 months	Wrap uncut cantaloupe and honeydew to prevent odor spreading to other foods.
Nectarines	5 days	8 to 12 months	
Papayas	Ripen at room temperature	8 to 12 months	
Peaches	2 to 3 days	8 to 12 months	
Pears	5 days	8 to 12 months	
Pineapples	5 to 7 days	4 to 6 months	
Plantains	Ripen at room temperature	8 to 12 months	
Plums	5 days	8 to 12 months	
Rhubarb	1 week	8 to 12 months	
Frozen juice			
– Concentrate	Do not refrigerate	2 years	
– Reconstituted	6 days	6 to 12 months	



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	Refrigerator at 32 to 40 F	Freezer at 0 F	COMMENTS
Artichokes	2 to 3 days		Freezes poorly
Asparagus	2 to 3 days	8 to 12 months	
Beans – green or wax	1 to 2 days	8 to 12 months	
Beets	2 weeks	8 to 12 months	
Broccoli	3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	
Brussels sprouts	3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	
Cabbage	1 week	8 to 12 months	Keep in the crisper or moisture-resistant wrap or bag
Canned vegetables	1 to 4 days (opened)	2 to 3 months	
Carrots	2 weeks	8 to 12 months	
Cauliflower	1 week	8 to 12 months	
Celery	1 week	8 to 12 months	
Corn, in husks	1 to 2 days	8 to 12 months	Keep moist
Cucumbers	1 week	8 to 12 months	
Eggplant	2 to 3 days	8 to 12 months	
Frozen vegetables	Do not refrigerate	8 months	
Greens	3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	
Kohlrabi	1 week	8 to 12 months	
Lettuce, head			
– unwashed	5 to 7 days		Store in moisture-resistant wrap, bag or lettuce keeper Wrap and store away from other drained vegetables and fruits to prevent russed spotting
– washed, thoroughly	3 to 5 days		
Lima beans	3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	
Mushrooms	1 to 2 days	8 to 12 months	Do not wash before storing
Onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes			Refrigeration not needed; see cupboard storage chart
Okra	3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	
Parsley	2 to 3 days	3 to 4 months	
Peas			
– shelled	3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	Keep in the crisper or moisture-resistant wrap or bag
– unshelled	3 to 5 days		
Peppers	1 week	8 to 12 months	
Radishes	2 weeks		Freezes poorly
Shredded cabbage, leaf and bibb lettuce, salad greens	1 to 2 days		Keep in moisture-resistant wrap or bag
Squash			
– summer	3 to 4 days	8 to 12 months	
– winter	Store in a dry place	8 to 12 months	
Tomatillos	1 week	8 to 12 months	
Tomatoes (ripe)	1 to 2 days	8 to 12 months	Ripen tomatoes at room temperature away from direct sunlight; then refrigerate
Zucchini	3 to 5 days	8 to 12 months	

