

Safe Food Storage

Fresh Produce

- Most fruits and vegetables stay freshest when refrigerated with some exceptions:
- Tomatoes and bananas should **not** be refrigerated.
- Vegetables such as onions, garlic, potatoes, and winter squash are best stored in cool, dark places outside of the refrigerator.

Canned/Boxed/Dry Foods

- Store off the floor and 18 inches away from walls.
- Place items in a dry area between 50 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit (°F).
- Bread you will not eat within 2 days can be tightly wrapped and stored in the freezer for up to 3 months.

Refrigerated Foods

- Keep all food at or below 40° F.
- Leave space for air to circulate in the refrigerator.
- Cook fresh meat, poultry or seafood the day you receive it or freeze for later use.
- Consume pre-prepared foods within 5 days of the date on the package; if repackaged, follow the guidelines on the label.

Frozen Foods

- Store all frozen food at or below 0° F.
- Frozen meats may be kept frozen up to 4 months prior to thawing and cooking.

Remember: Store newer products behind older items so that you use the older items first.

FIFO = First In, First Out!

Thaw Safely

NEVER thaw food at room temperature.

There are four safe ways to thaw:

1. In a refrigerator at 41°F or lower
2. In a microwave oven if the food is cooked immediately afterwards.
3. Submerged under running water at 70F or lower.
4. As a part of the cooking process, that is, cook from frozen.

Cook Safely

- Wash hands, utensils, cutting boards and countertops before and after food preparation.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, eggs, seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat food.
- The best way to determine if food is safe to consume after cooking is to use a food thermometer. Insert thermometer into the thickest part of the meat away from bone, fat, and gristle.

Cook foods to these temperatures:

- Poultry, casseroles and other stuffed meats - 165° F.
- Ground meats and egg dishes -160° F
- Beef, pork, veal and lamb (roasts, steaks, and chops) and fish - 145° F

Contact Information

Community Food Rescue

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Keeping Food Safe From Pantry to Plate

BROUGHT TO YOU BY MANNA AND:



WWW.COMMUNITYFOODRESCUE.ORG

Community Food Rescue

Community Food Rescue (CFR) is Montgomery County's coordinated food recovery system. CFR's goal is to reduce the amount of food that is still being wasted and redirect it to food assistance providers.

Please be aware that much of the food you will receive is past the printed date on the package. This food is still safe to consume!

The following information is based on federal guidelines and best practices set by the national food banking network.

What do package dates mean?

Expiration Date – Example: “Expires 4/1/15”

- Found on baby food, formula, vitamins, medicine, yeast, baking powder
- Do not consume these foods after this date. Yeast and baking powder are safe to consume after expiration date but they may not work as well.

Pack Date– Example: “Packed on 1/1/15”

- Usually found on canned items
- This date is when the food was packaged and it is usually safe to consume for a long period of time past this date.

Sell By Date– Example: “Sell by 3/15/15”

- Look for this on refrigerated foods such as milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs and meat.
- Stores must sell these foods by this date and often donate them as they approach this date.

Use By Date– Example: “Best if used by 3/30/15” (Also called Quality Date)

- Usually found on dry goods such as crackers, cookies, and dry cereal.
- After this date, food may lose quality and certain nutrients but is still safe.



Shelf-life of Common Foods

According to the USDA, if food is not opened and is properly stored, it is safe to consume past the “pack date”, “sell by date” or “use by date”. Use the following as a guide to determine how long after the package date food is safe to consume.

Fresh/Frozen Foods

- Fresh, uncooked meats- 2-5 days
- Prepared tuna salad, chicken salad, pasta salad- 3-5 days
- Milk– 5-7 days
- Yogurt- 7-10 days
- Eggs– 3-5 weeks
- Frozen dinners– 3-5 months
- Frozen meat– 4-8 months from date frozen

Dry Goods

- Baking mixes– 8 months
- Dried beans, nuts, & seeds– 1 year
- Rice/pasta/cereal– 1-2 years
- Canned foods (high acid) - 12-18 months
- Canned foods (meat and vegetables – 2-3 years
- Food in glass/plastic jars– 1 year

Clues to Food Safety

All CFR organizations prescreen food for safety, but use your senses and best judgment before consuming any food.

Discard:

- Meats and produce that are slimy or foul smelling.
- Cans that are swollen, leaking, stained, rusty, extremely dented on seals or lids, crimped, cracked, or foul smelling. Slight dents OK.
- Containers with lids that are loose or missing and safety seals that are broken or missing.
- Boxed foods with inside bags that are torn or leaking, contain mold or foreign objects
- Boxed food items that are open, torn, stained, wet, or have live or dead insects, webs, or droppings.
- **NEVER taste suspicious foods!**

SAFE



Shallow dent, not on seam



Open box, closed inner bag

NOT SAFE



Deep dent on top seam



Open box, open inner bag