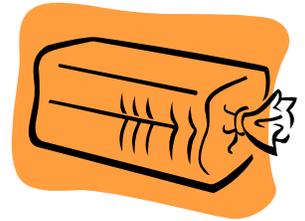


A Guide to Safe Leftovers

Have you ever found a container of leftovers in the back of your refrigerator that you had trouble recognizing because it was covered in fuzz? Or opened a loaf of bread that was covered in white and green spots? This is obviously a food that needs to be thrown away, but not all foods that are unsafe to eat are as obvious. Spoiled food may not always look, smell, or even taste bad.

Room Temperature Storage:

- Cooked foods should not remain at room temperature for more than **two hours**. The sooner you can get it in the refrigerator or freezer, the better.
- Some foods, such as apples, can be left at room temperature and can be stored for 3-4 days.
- Food should not be left out in a pan/casserole dish on the stove to cool. It needs to be in the refrigerator as soon as possible.
- Some foods can be left at room temperature and stored on the countertop or in cupboards in covered containers.
- Bread can be left on the counter in its original packaging, but will keep longer if kept in the refrigerator. Bread can also be stored in the freezer to keep it for use at a later time.



Room Temperature Storage	
Food	Storage Time
Apples, bananas, pears, oranges, uncut fruit	3-4 days, then refrigerate
Store bought loaf of bread	7 days
Canned fruit, tomatoes, pickles (acidic food)	12-18 months
Canned vegetables, soups, meats	2-5 years
Unopened processed snacks (crackers, chips, etc.)	3-8 months

Refrigerator Storage:

- Refrigerators are meant to hold food at a cool temperature. You should do the following to cool foods down faster:
 - Separate big amounts of leftovers into shallow 2-inch containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.
 - Cut large pieces of food into smaller pieces for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods, and leftovers within two hours of purchase or use.

Know how. Know **now**.

- Your refrigerator should be kept at or below 41°F. This can be measured by keeping a thermometer in your refrigerator.
- When placing items in the refrigerator, make sure you spread out the containers, making sure to not place them all in the same area.
- Refrigeration does not stop bacteria from growing but slows the process. Most foods will only keep in the refrigerator for a short period of time.
- Food should always be covered or in a storage container with a lid sealed to slow the growth of bacteria.
- Label and date your leftover containers to keep track of how long it has been in the refrigerator.
- If food looks or smells bad, the general rule is, “When in doubt, throw it out!”
- Do not overstuff the refrigerator. Cold air needs to be able to circulate to keep food safe and prevent freezing.



Refrigerator Storage	
Food	Storage Time
Fresh ground meat, poultry, seafood	1-2 days
Cooked meat, fish, and casserole dishes	3-4 days
Opened lunch meat, fresh steak, roasts	3-5 days
Milk, cream, Cottage cheese, Ricotta cheese	7-10 days
Fresh eggs in shell, hard cheeses such as Cheddar and Swiss	3-4 weeks

Freezer Storage:

- If you are not planning to eat your leftovers within a few days. To keep leftovers longer store them in the freezer. This will stop bacteria from growing.
- Your freezer should be kept at or below 0°F. This can be checked by keeping a thermometer in your freezer.
- Prevent freezer burn by: It is especially important to store food in good quality, air-tight containers. Frozen foods should be used as quickly as possible after freezing. You should keep your freezer below 0°F and open your freezer as little as possible.
- Prevent ice cream freezer burn by placing plastic wrap on the top before replacing the lid.
- Label and date your food before freezing.
- Use the “First In, First Out” rule to prevent food spoilage.



Freezer Storage	
Food	Storage Time
Ice cream, lunch meats	1-2 months
Bread, ground meat, cooked dishes/casseroles	2-3 months
Fish, seafood	3-6 months
Fresh meat (pork chops, steaks, poultry)	6-12 months