



# Food Dating And Storage Guide

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Community Nutrition Educators

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The following guide contains information and guidance to support our Hunger Relief Partners in providing safe, quality food for Delawareans in need.

This information is based on optimal storage conditions and assuming there is no damage to the product.

If you are unsure about the safety of a product, throw it out!



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# Food Product Dating Terminology

Adapted from: [Food Product Dating \(www.fsis.usda.gov\)](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)

**“Open Dating”** - the date stamped on a perishable food (meat, poultry, eggs, dairy) by the manufacturer that helps stores determine the amount of time to display the product. It helps the customer know when the product is at its best quality.

**“Use-By”** date is the last date recommended for use of the product while at peak quality. Infant formula is the only product required by the Federal Government to have this type of date.

**“Sell By”** date tells a store how long to display the product for sale. It tells the store when to remove the product from inventory.

**“Best if Used By (or Before)”** date is the last recommended day for best flavor and quality.

**“Freeze By”** date indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality.

**“Expiration Date”** is the date in which items are no longer allowed to be distributed or consumed. Some states require eggs to have either this or a “Sell By” date.

**“Closed or Coded”** dates are letters and / or numbers mostly on shelf stable products or cans.

Do not use food past its Expiration Date

**Always remember...WHEN IN DOUBT THROW IT OUT!**

## How to Store Shelf-Stable, Canned or Boxed Items

Shelf stable products are those that are non perishable and can be stored at room temperature. Not all canned goods are shelf stable and will be labeled as needing refrigeration.

Never use leaky, rusted, severely dented or bulging cans or jars with cracks, bulging or loose fitting lids. Do not consume food from boxes if the inside bag is missing or ripped, foreign objects are inside, or seals are ripped.

### How long can Shelf Stable food Last?

Adapted from: [Shelf-Stable Food Safety | Food Safety Inspection Service \(usda.gov\)](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/shelf-stable-food-safety)

Canned Ham (Shelf Stable)

2-5 years

Low acid canned goods—canned meat and poultry, soups, stews, pasta, potatoes, corn, spinach, carrots, beans, beets, peas, pumpkin

2-5 years

High acid canned goods—juice, tomatoes, grapefruit, apples, pineapples, mixed fruit, peaches, plums, pears, berries, pickles, sauerkraut, vinegar based sauces and dressings

12-18 months

Commercially packaged jerky

12 months

Hard / dry sausage

6 weeks in pantry

Rice and Dried Pasta

2 years

## When keeping food in dry storage it must be:

- 1) Away from walls
- 2) Out of direct sunlight
- 3) At least 6 inches off the floor
- 4) Cool (50-70 degrees F), Dry (50-60% humidity)
- 5) Clean
- 6) Well Ventilated

## Follow FIFO (First In, First Out)

Rotate products to ensure the oldest inventory is used first by using the FIFO method:

- 1) Identify the use-by or expiration dates
- 2) Store products with the earliest dates in front of those with the later dates
- 3) Use products stored in front first
- 4) Destroy expired food items



## Cold Food Storage Chart (adapted from [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov))

Food	Type	Refrigerator (40degrees F or below)	Freezer (0 degrees F or below)
<b>Salad</b>	Egg, chicken, ham, tuna, macaroni salads	3-4 days	Does not freeze well
<b>Hot dogs</b>	Opened	1 week	1-2 months
	Unopened	2 weeks	1-2 months
<b>Luncheon Meat</b>	Open package or deli sliced	3-5 days	1-2 months
	Unopened package	2 weeks	1-2 months
<b>Bacon and Sausage</b>	Bacon	1 week	1 month
	Sausage raw from chicken, turkey, pork, beef	1-2 days	1-2 months
	Sausage fully cooked from chicken, turkey, pork, or beef	1 week	1-2 months
<b>Hamburger, ground meats and ground poultry</b>	Sausage purchased frozen	After cooking, 3-4 days	1-2 months from date of purchase
	Hamburger, ground beef, turkey, chicken, other poultry, veal, pork, lamb, & mixtures of them	1-2 days	3-4 months
<b>Fresh beef, veal, lamb, and pork</b>	Steak, chops, and roasts	3-5 days	4-12 months
<b>Ham</b>	Fresh, uncured, uncooked	3-5 days	6 months
	Fresh, uncured, cooked	3-4 days	3-4 months

<b>Food</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Refrigerator (40degrees F or below)</b>	<b>Freezer (0 degrees F or below)</b>
<b>Ham (continued)</b>	Cured, cook-before-eating, uncooked	5-7 days or “use by” date	3-4 months
	Fully cooked, vacuum sealed at plant, Unopened	2 weeks or “use by” date	1-2 months
	Cooked, store wrapped, whole	1 week	1-2 months
	Cooked, store wrapped slices, half or spiral cut	3-5 days	1-2 months
	Country ham, cooked	1 week	1 month
	Canned, labeled, “keep refrigerated” unopened	6-9 months	Do not freeze
	Canned, shelf stable, opened	3-4 days	1-2 months
<b>Fresh Poultry</b>	Prosciutto, Parma, Serrano ham, dry Italian or Spanish type,	2-3 months	1 month
	Chicken or turkey whole	1-2 days	1 year
	Chicken or turkey pieces	1-2 days	9 months
<b>Eggs</b>	Raw eggs in shell	3-5 weeks	Do not freeze in shell
	Raw egg whites & yolks	2-4 days	12 months

**\*Note—An unopened, shelf stable, canned ham can be stored at room temperature for 2 years**

<b>Food</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Refrigerator (40degrees F or below)</b>	<b>Freezer (0 degrees F or below)</b>
<b>Eggs (continued)</b> <b>(Toss any frozen eggs with a broken shell)</b>	Raw, accidentally frozen in shell	Use immediately after thawing	Keep frozen, then refrigerate to thaw
	Hard Cooked	1 week	Do not freeze
<b>Egg substitutes</b>	Liquid, unopened	1 week	Do not freeze
	Liquid, opened	3 days	Do not freeze
	Frozen, unopened	After thawing, 1 week or "Use By" date	12 months
	Frozen, opened	After thawing, 3-4 days or "Use By" date	Do not freeze
	Casseroles with eggs	After baking, 3-4 days	After baking, 2-3 months
	Eggnog Commercial	3-5 days	6 months
	Eggnog homemade	2-4 days	Do not freeze
	Pumpkin, pecan, custard, chiffon pies	After baking, 3-4 days	After baking 1-2 months, do not freeze custard and chiffon
	Quiche with filling	After baking, 3-5 days	After baking 2-3 months
	<b>Soups and Stews</b>	Vegetable or meat added	3-4 days
<b>Leftovers</b>	Cooked meat or poultry	3-4 days	2-6 months
	Chicken nuggets/patties	3-4 days	1-3 months
	Pizza	3-4 days	1-2 months

# Are You Storing Food Safely?

## Refrigerated Foods



Adapted from [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov). Content Current as of 2/9/21 [Are You Storing Food Safely?](#)

[FDA](#)

The goal is to keep yourself and others from getting sick from microorganisms. Keeping food chilled at proper temperatures is the safest way to stay clear of foodborne illnesses.

- 1) Refrigerate or freeze perishables as soon as you get home. Never allow perishable food to sit at room temperature for more than two hours (one hour if temperatures are 90 degrees F or more). This includes "doggie bags."
- 2) Store raw meats, fish, poultry etc on the bottom and ready-to-eat items on top shelves.
- 3) Store raw and cooked foods separately to prevent juices from raw food leaking onto cooked food you may not cook hot enough to kill bacteria.
- 4) Don't crowd the refrigerator, the cool air needs room to circulate.
- 5) Make sure the temperature of the refrigerator remains at 40 degrees F or below.
- 6) Check labels. Some items need to be refrigerated only after opening.
- 7) Refrigerated ready-to-eat foods need to be eaten within the time stated in the earlier charts or bacteria can grow.
- 8) Be alert for spoiled food. Food doesn't have to look, smell or taste bad to make you sick. When in doubt, throw it out.
- 9) Marinate food in the refrigerator, do not re-use marinades unless you bring it to a boil first.
- 10) Do not store very hot food in the refrigerator, as it may raise the temperature of the refrigerator to unsafe levels.
- 11) Clean the refrigerator regularly and wipe up spills immediately so that bacteria doesn't spread.
- 12) Keep foods covered to maintain temperature. Eggs should be kept in their container in the refrigerator to remain cooler. The door area is one of the warmer places in the refrigerator.
- 13) Check expiration dates. When in doubt throw it out.

## **Frozen Foods**

- 1) Maintain your freezer temperature at 0 degrees F or below.
- 2) Food purchased frozen should be placed in the freezer quickly. It should not be allowed to thaw and then refreeze. When in doubt, throw it out. Thaw foods using safe methods.
- 3) Don't crowd the freezer, cold air needs room to circulate.
- 4) Food that is properly handled and stored at 0 degrees F should be safe. Quality diminishes if stored in the freezer longer than stated in the earlier charts.
- 5) Leftovers should be dated and stored in air tight containers.
- 6) Read labels and follow cooking, storage, and thawing directions.
- 7) Freezer burn is a food quality issue, not a food safety issue. To reduce freezer burn, wrap food in air tight packaging.
- 8) Clean up spills quickly, make sure the freezer does not ice over.

### **If you lose electricity**

- 1) Keep refrigerator and freezer closed as much as possible.



- 2) If unopened, refrigerators can hold temperature for about four hours; freezer for about 48 hours.
- 3) When the power comes back on—check the thermometers—if the freezer thermometer reads 40 degrees F or below, the FDA says the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- 4) If there are no thermometers, check packages carefully for signs of thawing.
- 5) Refrigerated food above 40 degrees for two hours or more should be thrown out.
- 6) When in doubt, throw it out!

# Quick Tips For Storing Fresh Produce

Adapted from [Keeping Your Produce Safe \(eatright.org\)](http://eatright.org) Reviewed April 2020

Most fruits and vegetables are the best quality when refrigerated. Some produce can be stored in the refrigerator at 40 degrees F or below or on the counter. Refrigerate all produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled.

- 1) Avoid produce with bruises, mold, or cuts.
- 2) Never store produce below raw meat or fish in the refrigerator.
- 3) Promptly store produce that requires refrigeration. Did the store have it in the refrigerator?
- 4) Refrigerate fresh produce within two hours of cutting or peeling.
- 5) Wash the outside of all whole produce (melons, tomatoes etc) before cutting to reduce risk of bacteria being transferred from the outside to the inside when being cut.



# Storage Time for Fruits and Vegetables

Adapted from: [Keep Fruits & Vegetables Fresher Longer | American Heart Association](#) last reviewed 2015

Apples - produce ethylene gas so keep them away from other produce. On the counter for up to 1 week or refrigerator for a little longer.

Avocados— ripen on the counter, then store in refrigerator

Bananas—ripen on the counter

Berries- do not wash until you eat them, Store in the refrigerator dry and uncovered.

Cherries and Grapes— store in refrigerator, unwashed in their original container

Melons—loose in refrigerator. Keep cut melon in refrigerator

Stone fruit—nectarines, peaches, plums— paper bag on counter to ripen, then refrigerator for a few days

Tomatoes—Loose in a bowl away from heat on the counter

Broccoli and Cauliflower—alone in separate drawer of refrigerator

Corn—in the husk in refrigerator

Cucumbers , peppers, and eggplant—room temperature or refrigerator for 1-3 days then use quickly

Green beans—refrigerator

Leafy greens—collards, kale, lettuce, chard, spinach—refrigerator

Onion and garlic—cool, dark and dry space, refrigerator ok, but away from other produce

Mushrooms—unwashed in refrigerator . They get slimy if washed.

Root vegetables— carrots, beets, radishes—refrigerator

Potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash—cool, dark and dry place like a pantry

# Where to Store Fruits and Vegetables eatingwell.com

## At Room Temperature

Bananas  
Basil  
Cucumber  
Eggplant  
Garlic  
Grapefruit  
Green Beans  
Lemons / Limes  
Onions  
Oranges  
Potatoes  
Sweet Potatoes  
Summer Squash  
Winter Squash  
Watermelon  
Zucchini

## Counter Then

### Refrigerator when

#### Ripe

Apricots  
Avocados  
Kiwi  
Mangoes  
Melons  
Nectarines  
Papayas  
Peaches  
Pears  
Pineapple  
Plums

## In Refrigerator

Apples  
Asparagus  
Berries  
Corn on Cob  
Broccoli  
Brussels Sprouts  
Cabbage  
Carrots  
Cauliflower  
Cherries  
Cilantro  
Dark Leafy  
Greens/Lettuce  
Grapes  
Leeks  
Parsley  
Peas  
Pomegranate

## **Most Needed Food Items**

Canned fruits

Canned vegetables

Canned meats—tuna, salmon, chicken

Canned and Dried Beans

Peanut butter

Grains (pasta, rice & macaroni and cheese)

100% fruit/vegetable juice

Healthy Snack (raisins or granola bars)

Please remember to look for labels which read:

- Low-sodium
- No salt added
- Whole grain
- Unsweetened
- No sugar added
- 100% juice

## **Interested in volunteering?**

Visit our online scheduling site, [www.fbd.volunteerhub.com](http://www.fbd.volunteerhub.com), or contact the volunteer coordinator at (302) 292-1305 ext 254 or [volunteer@fbd.org](mailto:volunteer@fbd.org). For opportunities in Kent and Sussex Counties, please contact (302) 393-2011 or [volunteerinmilford@fbd.org](mailto:volunteerinmilford@fbd.org). Please include the date and time you are interested in coming in and how many people are in your group.

# Programs at the Food Bank of Delaware

## Hunger Relief Programs

**Backpack program:** Providing food year-round to children in need when school is not in session and federal school meal programs are not available. Backpacks are stocked with kid-friendly food and are distributed on Fridays or the last day before a holiday or vacation in a discreet manner at schools.

**Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** is a federal food program that is designed to improve the health of senior citizens. Food for the program is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's agency of Food and Nutrition Service. Eligible seniors must meet income requirements, live in Delaware and be at least 60 years of age.

**School Pantry Program:** Providing at-risk families with children enrolled at the school with access to emergency food and hygiene products by visiting a food pantry within the school. Families select food based on their household's needs each week. Food for the pantry is provided by the Food Bank and school-wide food drives or community donations.

**Mobile Pantry:** Delivering shelf stable and fresh foods to central locations for low income households throughout the state.

**Healthy Pantry Center:** Providing emergency food to families in need. With proof of residency, participants may receive food every 14 days.



## Nutrition Education

**SNAP-Education (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program):** Funded by the United States Agriculture Department's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamp Program), this program aims to educate recipients on healthy eating within a limited budget. The SNAP-Ed team also encourages donations of nutritious food and works with partners to ensure that low-income Delawareans are receiving a variety of healthy foods when visiting local pantries.

For preschool age children, we provide an evidence-based curriculum in Early Childhood Education Centers and Head Start programs as part of the Healthy Childhood Project. Students experience different fruit and vegetables through a variety of interactive methods.



**WIC Outreach/Education:** (Women, Infant, and Children) is a supplemental food program that provides healthy food for low-income pregnant, breast-feeding, postpartum women, and infants and children up to age five. Participants will receive foods from all five food groups and receive cooking demonstrations, shopping tours, and nutrition education at various locations throughout the state. Each demonstration consists of a different recipe that can be made from items available in the food package. These recipes show the versatility of the food and emphasizes the nutrition quality of these items as they relate to the USDA My Plate. Go to [fbd.org](http://fbd.org) for sample recipes.

## **Community Outreach**

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach):** Assists low income residents in obtaining SNAP benefits and supports them throughout the process. By increasing SNAP usage in the state, more families have access to healthy foods and more dollars are available to stimulate the local economy. The team also provides individuals with application assistance.

**\$tand By Me:** Powered by the United Way and the State of Delaware, the goal of \$tand By Me is to provide Delawareans with a Personal Financial Coach and a toolkit to navigate the challenges leading to personal financial security. The program goal is to increase the capacity of Delawareans to understand and manage their finances in order to increase their financial stability and future economic opportunities. A Stand By Me Coach is housed out of the Food Bank of Delaware.

## **Workforce Development and Social Entrepreneurship**

**Delaware Food Works:** The Mission is to eliminate food insecurity through workforce development and social entrepreneurship available in food service (The Culinary School, ServSafe and Culinary Mentorship), warehousing (L.O.G.I.C) and agriculture (F.A.S.T).

**Discover Café:** Located at the Food Bank's Newark location. Open for breakfast and lunch, the café offers a training/employment opportunity to current culinary students and graduates. In addition, the café also provides statewide catering services.

**Farm Stand:** Open 10 months out of the year. During the summer season, an 18-week CSA is available to shareholders. The farm stand is open to the public Thursdays and Fridays from 2:00pm-7:00pm and Saturdays from 10:00am-2:00pm. Fresh produce and locally-made goods are procured from local vendors including the Food Bank's on-site farm.

**Farm:** Made possible by Corteva Agriscience, the Food Bank Farm is four acres and features two high tunnels and a propagation house for year-round growing. The farm is used to grow produce for the farm stand/CSA and to train students participating in F.A.S.T training. Community volunteer opportunities are available.

(Note: delivery of these programs have been changed during COVID to allow for safety and social distancing.)



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