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Food Safety Tips

Here's How Long Some Popular Foods Should Be Kept

- Refrigerator temperatures should be 41°F or below
- Freezer temperatures should be 0°F or below

Product	Storage Period In Refrigerator	Storage Period In Freezer
Fresh Meat		
<i>Beef: Ground</i>	1-2 days	3-4 months
<i>Beef: Steaks and roasts</i>	3-5 days	6-12 months
<i>Pork: Chops</i>	3-5 days	4-6 months
<i>Pork: Ground</i>	1-2 days	3-4 months
<i>Pork: Roasts</i>	3-5 days	4-6 months
<i>Fish: Lean (such as cod, flounder, haddock)</i>	1-2 days	up to 6 months
<i>Fish: Fatty (such as blue, perch, salmon)</i>	1-2 days	2-3 months
<i>Chicken: Whole</i>	1-2 days	12 months
<i>Chicken: Parts</i>	1-2 days	9 months
<i>Chicken: Giblets</i>	1-2 days	1-4 months
Cured Meats		
<i>Lunch meat</i>	3-5 days	1-2 months
<i>Sausage</i>	1-2 days	1-2 months
<i>Gravy</i>	1-2 days	2-3 months

Dairy Products		
<i>Cheese: Swiss, Brick, and Processed</i>	3-4 weeks	0
Milk	5 days (up to expiration day)	1 month
Ice cream, ice milk	—	2-4 months
Eggs: Fresh in shell	3 weeks	—
Eggs: Hard boiled	1 week	—

* Cheese can be frozen, but freezing will affect the texture and taste.

Sources: *Food Marketing Institute* for fish and dairy products, **USDA** for all other foods.

The Facts about Food Product Dating

Food Product dating tells people certain information about specific foods, but there is no uniform or universally accepted dating system in the United States. Except for infant formula and some baby foods, product dating is not required by federal regulations. The following definitions should help you understand the dates that are voluntarily printed on various food products:

- **“sell by”**: Tells the store how long to display the product for sale. Consumers should not buy the product after this date.
- **“best if used by (or before)”**: Tells consumers how long the product will retain its best flavor or quality. (This is not a purchase or safety date!)
- **“use by”**: Tells consumers the last date that is recommended for using the product while at peak quality. The manufacturer determines this date.
- **“closed or coded”**: Represents packing numbers for use by the manufacturer to track inventory, rotate stock or locate the product in case of a problem. (These are the numbers found on the lids of canned foods.) These dates do not indicate freshness or quality of the product.

Remember: When in doubt, throw it out!